

On 2021-02-15 11:03, Beatriz Gomez wrote:

>

>> Dear Mayor and City Council,

>>

>> As the entities who oversee the budgets of our school buildings, I ask
>> that you carefully review the letter below carefully.

>>

>> 300+ days and counting, since Somerville schools shut-down I am forced
>> to ask is education a priority in Somerville? The oversight/management
>> and planning of our school buildings in the past decade and half
>> perhaps tells the story of why Education is not a priority for the
>> current Administration. This is of concern because:

>>

>> · Schools are capital assets paid for by tax dollars

>>

>> If a school building is not properly maintained, the city is letting
>> investments paid with city and state tax dollars deteriorate.

>>

>> · Schools that do not perform efficiently negatively impact the
>> environment

>>

>> Buildings that are not properly managed do not perform efficiently and
>> negatively impact the environment.

>>

>> · Schools' building performance impacts (Indoor air quality,
>> ventilation, lighting etc.) the health and academic performance of its
>> students

By the time a student graduates' high school, they will have spent
more than 15,000 hours in school, which is the 2nd longest exposure time
after their home. Research has shown that building performance
>> can impact student performance and well-being.

>>

>> · School Building Life Safety is in jeopardy! (See image below
>> of Brown School Fire Alarm Annunciator)

>>

>> Below is a summary of Somerville Infrastructure in the past 17 Years
>> of this Administration that shows school building mismanagement or
>> lack of prioritization. I believe this indicates the urgent need for a
>> change in Somerville's School Building Management structure
>> particularly as the City plans its FY 22 Budget.

>>

>> **NO STAFF DEDICATED FULL-TIME TO SCHOOL FACILITIES**

>>

>> Somerville has no staff/department dedicated to school facilities.

>> Currently Somerville Schools with 5,000 students are under the

>> umbrella of the Capital Projects Department with a current staff of 4

>> including its director and the Department of Public Works. The \$256
>> Million High School renovation is overseen by the Director of
>> Infrastructure and Asset Management who is also in charge of millions
>> of infrastructure improvements.

>>
>> The City of Cambridge with 7,000 students has a staff of 78 dedicated
>> to School Facilities this includes Custodians, Carpenters,
>> Electricians, HVAC Tech, Fire Alarm Electrician and a Net Zero Project
>> Manager. Or compare the Arlington High School Project with the
>> Somerville High School Project Website: The SHS project site has an
>> error page and the AHS is a detailed website where you can access all
>> types of information – which indicates that Somerville does not even
>> have the bandwidth to have transparent records of its largest school
>> capital project at the cost of \$256 Million. (Please take the time to
>> read project meeting notes. There are careful discussions on how each
>> \$ is spent. And note the error page in SHS was repaired after months
>> of being off-line and you cannot find Building Committee Meeting
>> Minutes or even know who is in the Building Committee!)

>>
>> AHSPROJECT.ORG [1] [1 [1]] Website

>>
>> SHSPROJECT.ORG [2] [2 [2]] Website (In November 2020)

>>
>> More recent events discovered during COVID have shown that the City
>> had no oversight over Honeywell with whom they signed a \$7.8 Million
>> Dollar Contract in 2010. This Contract included an energy retrofit
>> program that was “_expected to cut more than \$450,000 in annual
>> energy and operating costs.”_ The City intended to use the energy
>> savings, which were guaranteed by Honeywell, to pay for the
>> improvements. Apparently, the city was not tracking those energy
>> savings these past 10 years, or they would have been made aware that
>> Honeywell was not properly maintaining its school building systems.

>>
>> ATHLETICS VS. SCHOOLS

>>
>> 1. Somerville has 2 Hockey Rinks one completed in 2011 under
>> the
>> current administration.

>>
>> a. City of Cambridge – 1 Ice Skating Rink (Simoni)

>>
>> b. City of Arlington – 1 Ice Skating Rink/Arena

>>
>> 2. Somerville has had a Master Plan for its Athletic Fields
>> since 2016 and has successfully implemented several projects in his
>> Master Plan

>>
>> 3. Somerville removed field maintenance from DPW and created a
>> Fields Maintenance Department. It has a dedicated team for this work
>> via the Rec Department with a specialist on “grass fields” at a
>> budget cost of \$250,000 per public records. This includes:
>>
>> a. 1 Operations Director
>>
>> b. 1 Field Recreation Foreman
>>
>> c. 2 Recreation Fields Laborers
>>
>> Schools to my knowledge do not have such a structured maintenance
>> department.
>>
>> SCHOOLS – Management/Building Oversight History
>>
>> 1. 1995 – 2007: 5 Schools Built (1995 West, 1999 Kennedy and
>> Healy, 2003 Capuano, 2007 Argenziano 2007.) All initiated or
>> completed
>> under previous administrations.
>>
>> 2. Somerville has no master plan for improvement of its school
>> buildings and no plans for the growth of its student enrollment per
>> public records.
>>
>> 3. 2007-2020 New Construction: (1 Completed and 1 Under
>> Construction)
>>
>> · 2012 - East Somerville School rebuilt after a 2007 fire
>> forced its reconstruction. Was the fire the result of building
>> mismanagement?
>>
>> · 2018 - High School construction started after its loss of
>> accreditation and at the time the building was in such poor shape it
>> was a life safety hazard. Planning started in 2012. Nine years after
>> the current administration had been in office.
>>
>> 4. 2016 Somerville sold the Powder House School and it is now
>> converted to Condos. This could have been vital for relocation of
>> other schools during renovation if a master plan had been in
>> place.
>>
>> 5. Somerville has a school that is 120 years old. Brown School
>> and has not seen a full renovation in 120 Years.
>>

>> a. Prior to 2015:

>>

>> i.

>>

>> Multiples visible Cracks on Kidder Side of Building Monitored by

>> Crack

>> Gages. Not clear if the cracks increased in size or if have ever

>> been

>> actively monitored and evaluated for building safety. City's plan

>> for

>> repairs or assessment not identified for this item. To date NO

>> ACTION.

>>

>> ii.

>>

>> Electrical system would trip if microwave was turned on in teachers

>> lounge.

>>

>> b. 2015 Roof Collapsed – No further action for renovation or

>> improvement study since this event which will celebrate its 6-year

>> anniversary on March 3, 2021.

>>

>> c. 2018 Flood shutdown 2 Classrooms – No further action for

>> renovation or improvement study since this event. At the time DPW

>> Director noted not to worry there are “worst buildings out

>> there.”

>> School was not included in a 2019 building assessment study by City

>> despite commitments in 2018 after flood to have a building

>> assessment

>> completed.

>>

>> d. 2020

>>

>> i.

>>

>> City is unsure if this school will ever open again - 12 Classrooms

>> and

>> 250 Students with nowhere to go?

>>

>> ii.

>>

>> City consistently excludes the Brown School in its re-opening plan

>> presentations

>>

>> iii.

>> City has delayed any repairs or action under the premise that any

>> work
>> would trigger compliance with ADA – disregarding equity and civil
>> right violation concerns
>>
>> iv.
>> City ignores life safety concerns this school could present with no
>> sprinkler system in the 1st and 2nd Floor (only fire extinguishers
>> as
>> first line of defense on those floors) and no life safety systems
>> that
>> meet current NFPA standards (National Fire Protection Association).
>> Building is a mixture of brick and wood. If it went on fire it would
>> go up in flames quickly and will fill out with smoke, putting
>> students
>> and teachers lives at risk
>>
>> 6. Winter Hill,
>>
>> a. 1975 building has not had any significant improvements in
>> the
>> past decade other than window replacement and exterior
>> landscape/park
>> work.
>>
>> b. 2021 City announced that the school cannot open this year
>> as
>> more extensive repairs were found than where projected in the HVAC
>> improvement plan for COVID Readiness.
>>
>> 7. Deficiencies Found Through HVAC Improvements for COVID &
>> Mechanical System Maintenance
>>
>> a. Through HVAC study it was noted that some systems in the
>> schools have not been touched for a decade. (I assume since
>> Honeywell
>> first did work on these systems in 2010?)
>>
>> b. Argenziano one of the newest buildings, which was completed
>> 13 years, ago already has fans that are not functioning properly.
>> Mechanical systems can have a life span of 15-25 years and City
>> should
>> have had a mechanical systems improvement in place to avoid such
>> failure.
>>
>> c. Honeywell
>>

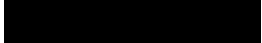
>> Through HVAC repairs it appears that Honeywell has not fulfilled
>> their
>> contract for system management issued in 2010.

>>
>> <http://www.thesomervilletimes.com/archives/9151>

>>
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>

<https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/honeywell-helps-city-of-somerville-reduce-energy-costs-and-meet-environmental-goals-106101358.html>

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>> In the next few months the Somerville High School first phase will
>> hopefully open. Its citizens voted to raise their taxes to help fund
>> the construction of this school and trusted the city to manage
>> millions of tax dollars in one single asset. Who will oversee the
>> management of this multi-million-dollar tax investment once it
>> opens?
>> The future of the Brown School is unclear six years after its roof
>> collapse. The Winter Hill school is closed until further notice.
>> Based
>> on such events it is concerning there is no dedicated department
>> with
>> pertinent professionals (Electricians, HVAC Tech, Fire Alarm
>> Electrician and a Net Zero Project Manager etc.) to oversee
>> Somerville's School Facilities. We have learned through COVID that
>> the structure that is in place is NOT working and our school
>> buildings
>> are failing to the point that 2 are currently shut down through the
>> end of the year. As more and more deficiencies are found in our
>> school
>> buildings, some buildings that are barely 10 years old, the future
>> of
>> the opening of our schools is in jeopardy and students are being
>> denied an in-person education. The environmental impacts of
>> mismanaged
>> buildings at a time when there are growing concerns about the future
>> of our environment is also reckless.
>>
>> As a reminder of how neglected our school building are, I would like
>> to share with you a photo of the Fire Alarm Annunciator at the Brown
>> in 2019. The annunciator indicates a trouble in the basement which
>> is
>> where both the Kindergarten Classrooms and the boilers which are
>> powered by fuel are located. This annunciator showed this troubled
>> signal for 3 days with NO response. Luckily to my knowledge there
>> were

>> no issues, but this shows the blatant negligence of our school
>> building in which a life safety signal is ignored for days! Note
>> that
>> this is a Honeywell device which leads me to believe there have been
>> long standing issues with Honeywell that the City has overlooked due
>> to poor management.
>>
>> Brown School - Fire Alarm Annunciator – April 19, 2019 (Note -
>> Honeywell device.)
>>
>> The City needs to create and fund a department to oversee its school
>> buildings. We have such a department for our athletic fields.
>> Let's
>> make our school buildings a priority so our children can have a safe
>> and healthy place to learn and our teachers have a proper workplace.
>> Let's learn from our past mistakes.
>>
>> The limited infrastructure for the oversight of our school buildings
>> in Somerville also indicates that we should really consider Plan B
>> for
>> the opening of our schools. We do not have the bandwidth to properly
>> manage the scale of the work going on as the schedules that use
>> adjectives like pessimistic and optimistic and constantly miss their
>> targets indicate – that is a cry for help and not a schedule!
>>
>> Regards,
>> Beatriz Gómez
>> 
>> Somerville, MA 02144
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>> Links:
>> -----
>> [1] <http://AHSPROJECT.ORG>
>> [2] <http://SHSPROJECT.ORG>