



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council School Building Facilities and Maintenance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 21, 2026

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 6:13 pm by Chair Link and adjourned at 7:48 pm with a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilors Sait and Link), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Scott).

Others present: Leiran Biton - School Committee Member, Laura Pitone - School Committee Member, Elizabeth Eldridge - School Committee Member, Richard Raiche - Infrastructure and Asset Management Director, Eric Weisman - Department of Public Works Commissioner, Danielle Barry - Facilities, Safety and Transportation Coordinator, Jon Bronenkant - Public Space and Urban Forestry Senior Planner and Delaney Fisher-Cassioli - Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

Present: Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait and City Councilor At Large Jon Link
Absent: Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [26-0857](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Committee Meeting of April 30, 2026.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Ward Five City Councilor Sait and City Councilor At Large Link
ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Scott

2. Resolution (ID # [26-0241](#))

By Councilor Link and Councilor Mbah
 That the Administration provide the Committee on School Building Facilities and Maintenance with regular updates on the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) process for the Winter Hill and Brown Schools.

Richard Raiche, Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, reported that the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) is continuing its formal review of the preliminary design program while the tech team works on the preferred schematic report. Director Raiche explained that test borings and drilling around the building are scheduled for next week to better understand subsurface conditions following the demolition of previous school buildings. The work will also help determine whether ground-source geothermal may be feasible and will include the installation

of monitoring wells to assess groundwater conditions. Director Raiche noted that the most recent community engagement meeting focused on parking and site conditions. Chair Link asked how many borings would be conducted, what the anticipated noise levels would be, and how much the findings could potentially affect the project design. Director Raiche responded that the borings are intended to help inform the design process and said that approximately five to six borings will be completed as close to the building as possible. He added that neighboring residents have been notified and that the work is expected to take place during normal construction hours, between 7:00 am and 3:00 pm, over the course of about a week. School Committee Member Elizabeth Eldridge asked for an update on the recent parking and site design meeting, and Director Raiche stated that the design team is preparing materials to present at the next School Building Committee meeting on June 8.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Resolution
(ID # [26-0709](#))

By Councilor Davis

That the Administration report to the School Committee and this Council, on indoor air quality conditions at the Kennedy School, specifically regarding mold and humidity levels, and outline steps being taken to address them.

Eric Weisman, Department of Public Works (DPW) Commissioner, shared that DPW met with the School Department to develop a protocol for incident intake and information gathering at both the school and district levels. Under the proposed process, the School Department would assess reported concerns and, when necessary, DPW would conduct a site inspection based on the nature of the issue. In the Kennedy School, Commissioner Weisman noted that DPW reviewed 311 requests and found few complaints related to air quality. DPW also inspected several storage spaces and did not observe evidence of mold, though some areas will continue to be monitored. He added that a previous valve leak had been repaired and that staff would continue monitoring the area that had experienced water damage and is stained.

Laura Pitone, School Committee Member, shared that they had a productive conversation with custodial staff and expressed appreciation for the follow-up and research conducted. Danielle Barry, Facilities, Safety and Transportation Coordinator, added that she had instructed school staff to report any signs of mold, staining, or related concerns immediately through 311 so the appropriate questionnaire and DPW review process could be initiated.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Order
(ID # [26-0710](#))

By Councilor Davis

That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management update this Council and the School Committee about safety improvements to security cameras, enclosed schoolyard fencing, balconies, and other infrastructure at the Argenziano School.

Eric Weisman, Department of Public Works Commissioner, shared that DPW staff conducted a walkthrough to review concerns related to the cameras and the fencing. Commissioner Weisman stated that DPW was scheduling repairs to the fencing and the work would take place after the school year ends, with repairs expected to be completed by the end of June and additional cameras to be installed over the summer. Danielle Barry, Facilities, Safety and Transportation Coordinator, added that there is a need for three additional cameras and confirmed that DPW had committed to installing them during summer break.

Chair Link asked about the locking features of the gate, and Commissioner Weisman explained that the gate would swing in both directions and could be secured by staff during recess. Chair Link noted that the area is also used for student drop-off and confirmed that parents would continue to have access to the area for drop-off. Coordinator Barry noted that multiple walkthroughs had been conducted with the principal and that staff believed the design was the right fit for the needs of students. Laura Pitone, School Committee Member, and Commissioner Weisman further clarified that the gate would remain unlocked when school is not in session and would be locked by school administration during school hours. Coordinator Barry stated that the School Department has not received feedback from families regarding the fencing, though any concerns raised would be taken into consideration, and she encouraged parents to direct concerns to the school principal.

In response to a question from Member Pitone regarding the balcony fence, Richard Raiche, Infrastructure and Asset Management Director, noted that there was no update at this time. Director Raiche stated that discussions with school administration were ongoing regarding the specifics of the project and whether the school wished to move forward. He will get an update before the next meeting.

Chair Link asked whether an emergency access plan had been developed, given that this is the only accessible entrance to the school. Coordinator Barry explained that the double-swing gate design had been selected in part for safety and accessibility reasons, as it would allow fire apparatuses easier access to the area. She added that a plan had been developed with the principal and school staff and that she would follow up with the Fire Department to confirm they were in agreement. In response to a question from Councilor Sait regarding whether any issues had been identified during prior walkthroughs, Coordinator Barry stated that none had been identified. Coordinator Barry also noted that at other schools with openings in fencing,

school staff are typically stationed near those areas and anticipates the same can be done here.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

5. Resolution
(ID # [26-0492](#))

By Councilor Davis

That the Commissioner of Public Works discuss with this Council, practical solutions to clearing snow from schoolyards without damaging play surfaces to allow students to access outdoor play areas.

Leiran Biton, School Committee Member, noted concerns that the playground surfaces may be nearing the end of their 10 year warranty period and emphasized the importance of maintaining adequate outdoor play spaces for students. Jon Bronenkant, Public Space and Urban Forestry Senior Planner, explained that Somerville's poured-in-place playground material is porous and is currently the only accessible surface product approved for use in the City. He noted that schoolyards require balancing plowable asphalt areas with accessible play surfaces that cannot be plowed, and stated that the play areas are generally usable 95-98% of the year. Senior Planner Bronenkant added that he has coordinated with DPW to ensure that a plow truck can access the Kennedy School site.

Member Biton suggested that parents may be willing to assist with snow removal using plastic shovels and brushes. Eric Weisman, Department of Public Works Commissioner, responded that shovels of any kind are not recommended, clarifying that the concern is not only the warranty but also potential damage that could result in costly repairs to the City. He added that snow removal would still require salting afterward, which is not possible on poured-in-place surfaces because it degrades the material, and that sand cannot be used because it becomes embedded in the surface. Member Biton requested that DPW provide school leadership with a clear diagram identifying which areas may or may not be cleared during winter conditions. In response to a request from Laura Pitone, School Committee Member, Senior Planner Bronenkant and Commissioner Weisman agreed to draft a memo outlining potential snow removal options they had considered and are used elsewhere, such as heated surfaces and battery powered snow blowers, and the reasons they were not feasible for the City. Councilor Sait encouraged residents to consider donating winter gear for students in need, and Danielle Barry, Facilities, Safety and Transportation Coordinator, stated that she would coordinate with school principals to organize a clothing drive, likely around Thanksgiving. Elizabeth Eldridge, School Committee Member, raised concerns about accessibility for students with mobility devices during snowy conditions, and Commissioner Weisman responded that DPW clears as much of the outdoor areas as possible and also noted that there is no formal citywide policy regarding whether students may play in the snow, and that this is generally determined by individual school leadership.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- SBFM - 2026-05-21 Attachment (with 26-0710)