



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Gomez Mouakad at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 7:30 pm. Councilor Clingan moved to adjourn, and the motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo - Mayor's Office, Laura Pitone - School Committee, Emily Ackman - School Committee, Sara Dion - School Committee, Chad Mazza - Superintendent of Operations, Rich Raiche - IAM, Jill Lathan - DPW, Stephanie Widzowski - Assistant Clerk of Committees.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Laura Pitone of the School Committee to speak. Ms. Pitone read a statement drafted by members of the School Committee and the City Council clarifying the purpose of the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee. She also spoke to challenges in navigating partners' different responsibilities, but stated that both groups involved should address joint responsibilities to find a path forward.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Beatriz Gomez Mouakad , Jesse Clingan and Vice Chair Lance L. Davis

Feasibility Study

Order
(ID # [22-1528](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on the status of the School Building Systems Feasibility Study.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked how the Kennedy trailer project relates to this item. Dir. Raiche explained that the Kennedy project is separate because it is an emergency repair, but that temporary trailers are there to buy time for capital improvements. Dir. Raiche went on to give updates about the Systems Feasibility Study. He said that they are reviewing six different options for the study now. DPW and contractors have been doing "pre-work" at other schools, and will begin field work on schools two at a time, starting with West and Healy. There will also be a visual assessment.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Laura Pitone of the School Committee to speak. Ms. Pitone asked if there is a timeline or chart to share for the high-level assessments or for Kennedy. Dir. Raiche said that he would follow up with those requests.

Dir. Raiche spoke to the Capuano and Winter Hill systems, calling the latter "beyond repair". He said there is not a plan to look separately at the Winter Hill heating and cooling outside of the holistic building. Dir. Hamel

explained the steps involved in transitioning from heat to cooling and vice versa. He said that problems arise when first doing system startup in the shoulder months. Finally, he said that he had not received any 311 calls for Capuano systems. Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Ms. Dion to speak, who asked if the heating systems need to be set to a certain temperature. Dir. Hamel replied that some systems are dated and can only turn on or off.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Order
(ID # [22-1527](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Strezo
That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management provide an update on the status of the School Building Feasibility Study.

Dir. Raiche gave an overview of the next steps. He said that the first activity will be the enrollment study, for which he and Ms. Pitone of the School Committee will have a meeting this Friday with demographers to review the dashboard. The plan is to spend November and December investigating all of the building systems and conditions of Winter Hill and determine what action is needed to get the building to code. Dir. Raiche said he estimates that work to go through January, and then in the next couple months his team will be reporting the results and developing a strategy. Chair Gomez Mouakad noted that the Brown study assumes grades 1-5 and asked if this study will also assume the same student body. Dir. Raiche replied that the base case is status quo, but that the enrollment study may highlight a change or “delta”.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Ms. Pitone of the School Committee to speak, who commented that the district will need to plan to incorporate programming appropriately. There was discussion as to how the feasibility study plans will merge with the MSBA process. Dir. Raiche added that the delta is currently unknown. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked for insight into how this work will merge with the MSBA process for next meeting.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Maintenance

Order
(ID # [22-1715](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management and the Commissioner of Public Works provide an update on preventive maintenance plans for all school buildings.

Dir. Hamel explained that the intent is to take what is standard for preventative maintenance inspections and apply it to government. They will create a schedule for anyone to access to see upcoming work. Dir. Hamel said that the schedule may be skewed based on previous maintenance or lack thereof, but it should provide a good picture.

Chair Gomez Mouakad requested a chart of plans for the study. Councilor Clingan also requested a flowchart of groups and their domains. Commissioner Lathan suggested this work go to Dir. Weisman to compile. Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Ms. Pitone of the School Committee, who requested any timeline for main plans.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Order
(ID # [22-1716](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Chief Information Officer provide an update on ongoing issues with Wi-Fi services for all schools.

Liaison Carrillo provided an update on cellular at Winter Hill and Wi-Fi in general. She said that the cellular equipment has arrived and needs to be installed. Dir. Goodridge will be submitting a request to get funding for more access points to improve overall Wi-Fi connection. Councilor Clingan asked if Dir. Goodridge is in charge of both the school and city IT departments. Superintendent Mazza said that John Breslin is the IT Director for the schools, and that the School Department IT handles computer issues at the schools while the city's IT handles the larger picture.

Chair Gomez Mouakad requested the Chief Operating Officer at the next meeting, and sponsored Ms. Pitone of the School Committee to speak. Ms. Pitone requested clarity on the city's specific responsibilities and on the budget process for IT.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Order
(ID # [22-1417](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Commissioner of Public Works provide quarterly reports to the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee on any major repairs and 311 work orders in school buildings.

Dir. Hamel said that this task has been underway for a few months and that sharing information through 311 has always been a weak point. He said that there is a training tomorrow for building staff to get trained on iPads. He spoke to recent issues at the Capuano School that were not reported to 311 because they were immediately addressed.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Ms. Pitone of the School Committee, who asked about the communication channel and how it gets from staff to families. Dir. Hamel explained that the vendor goes onsite, reports back to DPW on the issue, at which point Commissioner Lathan and Dir. Weisman become involved. After a plan is drafted, it gets shared with administrative staff in schools, who can distribute that information to families.

Chair Gomez Mouakad requested 311 reports for problems affecting indoor

environments.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Order
(ID # [22-1418](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor McLaughlin
That the Commissioner of Public Works report on planned repairs for the East Somerville Community School facade failures.

Dir. Hamel said that a company inspected the facade and gave a quote. He will review the quote with staff and share the plan of action later on. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if there was a suspected cause, to which Dir. Hamel said that the contractor did not think it was structural.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Order
(ID # [22-0186](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Davis, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Clingan and Councilor Kelly
That the Commissioner of Public Works report on all school building deferred maintenance projects completed following the ventilation system assessment, proposed completion dates, and strategies to assess needs for future deferred maintenance projects.

Liaison Carrillo said that more time is needed for this item.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Resolution
(ID # [22-1116](#))

By Councilor Scott, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Davis
That the Administration respond to educator and parent concerns regarding building maintenance and capital improvements for the Winter Hill School.

Dir. Hamel reviewed the memo attached for this item in which he wrote about the Winter Hill chiller leak. He also stated that previous springs had changed how DPW prepares for hot weather in that they start preparations a month earlier to ensure that chillers are functional. He said that repairs happen quickly overall, but the key is communication.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked about ceilings and roofing related to the reported leaks and if there have been inspections. Dir. Hamel said that there had been inspections for ceilings, but would share the Chair's concerns about roofing with Capital and report back. Chair Gomez Mouakad also asked about the rodent response, to which Dir. Hamel replied that there is now a contract - Waltham Pest - who has completed inspections. Councilor Clingan commented that the roof is relatively recent and would have been a chance to cover the skylight in the library.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Ms. Pitone of the School Committee. Ms.

Pitone said that there have been correspondents asking about issues intersecting different groups in the city and asked what would be the appropriate response. Chair Gomez Mouakad said that an official response letter to be shared externally is warranted and requested the Administration provide one for the next meeting. Liaison Carrillo added that the Mayor and PTA Council are scheduled to meet soon, which could be another venue for this dialogue.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE