



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 28, 2022

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Gomez Mouakad at 6:04 pm and adjourned at 7:35 pm. Chair Gomez Mouakad moved to adjourn, and the motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo - Mayor's Office, Laura Pitone - School Committee (Co-Chair), Emily Ackman - School Committee, Sara Dion - School Committee, Jill Lathan - DPW, Marc Hamel - DPW, Susana Hernandez Morgan - Chief of Staff of Strategy, Jose Mendez - School Committee, Rich Raiche - IAM, Stephanie Widzowski - Assistant Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

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

School Buildings - Parks

1. Order
(ID # [22-0295](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Executive Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development provide an update on the status of work and finances of the Community Preservation Act grants of 2018 for the Brown School and West Somerville Neighborhood School playground designs and the continuing plans for the projects.

Chair Gomez Mouakad noted as in the attached memo that the construction on the Brown School has been delayed to 2023. Legislative Liaison Carrillo agreed to take questions back to the Administration, including those from Ms. Dion (sponsored by Chair Gomez Mouakad) about the estimated date of completion for the West Somerville schoolyard, and from the Chair about the project date for the construction.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Laura Pitone of the School Committee to speak. Ms. Pitone asked whether the design at the Brown School costing \$25,000 has been completed. Councilor Davis replied that the design funding was for the first larger rehabilitation plan and that, to his knowledge, there are no plans for another project because that is pending the school's building review. To date, the plan slated for next summer is the only plan for Brown. Chair Gomez Mouakad confirmed this from past meetings she attended.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

School Buildings - Feasibility Study

2. 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.

Dir. Raiche explained that IAM will be remaining in most of the schools. Many of the HVAC systems in those schools are nearing the end of life, so IAM is compiling a list of equipment to replace that DPW is no longer able to repair. The controls for those systems will also need to be migrated off the obsolete Honeywell system. Dir. Raiche said they are currently on track, but the work will be ongoing for several months before those systems are triaged and replaced.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if engineers are in place for the feasibility study, to which the answer was yes. She also asked if any buildings are being prioritized to avoid disruptions to students. Dir. Raiche replied that West and Healy are the primary focus, after which they will address Kennedy. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked for the timeline on the replacement of the controls. Dir. Raiche said that they are still creating a timeline and might not have it by next month, but will report back on a monthly basis.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. 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 explained that they are at the next step in master planning. He said that with mechanical upgrades, it is safe to inhabit the building for the next 25-50 years. Two buildings that will not last or meet program needs are the Brown and Winter Hill schools. The feasibility study is doing long-range planning, the first phase of which is an enrollment study to understand the needs of the future population. That work has started and early reports should come out by the end of the year or in January of 2023. Dir. Raiche said that IAM is assessing the Winter Hill building and should start aligning that work with the enrollment study in November. The more public phase of the work will start in 2023.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked about the purpose of the feasibility study. Dir. Raiche answered that if they renovate Winter Hill, they need to understand what would need to be added to be compliant with code and ADA, to remove unknowns, and to attach costs to needs. He also said that zoning will be taken into account.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if it is feasible to aim for shovels in the ground on one of the schools in five years. Dir. Raiche said that for shovels in the ground, five years is realistic.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

- 4. Order
(ID # [22-1121](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management report on the status of the 1895 building.

Dir. Raiche said that the disposition of the 1895 building was determined from the master plan and that he would share a resource to the committee members via email. He explained that the goal with 1895 is to make it a one-stop center for municipal services, with City Hall becoming mainly a seat of government for the Mayor and the City Council. He said he felt this is one of the more important projects in the CIP to proceed with, and said that the development of that CIP is underway and may be ready to share by the end of the year.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if this project would be considered part of the school renovation program - renovate the building for temporary school use and then retrofit it. Dir. Raiche said that plan would hinder the functioning of city government because there is not enough space and the building does not have heat.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Laura Pitone of the School Committee to speak. Ms. Pitone said that the School Committee has not released the 1895 building, and she spoke to the need for a “swing space” - meaning if there are issues with another school building, students have a place to go. She said the School Committee needs to deliberate over this new use for a school building, and that there were going to be some school functions in 1895 originally that did not end up in the master plan.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

School Buildings - Maintenance

- 5. Order
(ID # [22-1416](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Commissioner of Public Works report on all major repairs made to school buildings during the summer.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

- 6. 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.

Commissioner Lathan said that this work will be a collaboration with IAM. Councilor Clingan asked how the liaison on the school side will be working with DPW and whether he has been invited to participated in meetings.

Commissioner Lathan said that he is involved in the School Department. Councilor Clingan said he hopes to use these meetings for transparency in city issues. Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Laura Pitone of the School Committee to speak. Ms. Pitone said that Susana Hernandez Morgan and Jose Mendez are here with the School Committee to observe and determine who would be the best representative for the school district during these meetings.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

7. 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.

Chair Gomez Mouakad said that parts of the facades on the East Somerville Community School have been damaged and fallen off. Dir. Hamel said that they are investigating whether this can be handed by DPW or if it requires a larger capital project. They should hear a response either at the next meeting or in upcoming reports.

Councilor Clingan asked if something is out of warranty or if this is out of range of what a contractor would have to cover. Dir. Raiche said this was his first hearing about problems with the facades, and suspects they are out of warranty but will double-check. Chair Gomez Mouakad added that contractor warranties are usually good for one year, then materials are under a separate warranty.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

8. Order
(ID # [22-1590](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Pineda Neufeld
That the Commissioner of Public Works report on the power outage at the West Somerville Public School on September 7, 2022 and the measures being taken for temporary and permanent repairs.

Dir. Hamel explained that water had infiltrated into the switch box of the chiller on the roof. They called in a high voltage expert to track the main breaker of the building, and found that the breaker with the chiller was faulty and deferring to the main breaker. They have since replaced the switch box and it is back online now. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked why water had been infiltrating, to which Dir. Hamel said that the deterioration around the switch box may be to blame. Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Sara Dion to speak. Ms. Dion asked if there was not a backup generator in the school building. Dir. Hamel said that the generator was being worked on during that period.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

9. Order
(ID # [22-1564](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Chief Information Officer update this Council on the work to fix the WiFi signals and cell phone reception at the Winter Hill School.

Ms. Carrillo gave an update from IT that there had been work done and they are waiting for Verizon to deliver equipment. The long-term fix is to install generic extenders in the schools.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Laura Pitone of the School Committee to speak. Ms. Pitone said that the WiFi problem is more complicated and is affecting more than just Winter Hill. Chair Gomez Mouakad suggested closing the item and putting in a separate order specifically for WiFi. Chief of Staff Hernandez Morgan said that she is happy to check with the IT director to get a sense of which buildings are impacted the most.

Councilor Clingan commented about internet infrastructure in schools, noting that IT falls under the school department, but whether or not that applies to WiFi. He suggested every classroom should be able to have its own router. Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Sara Dion to speak, who added her experiences as a teacher having to adapt lessons on the go when WiFi fails. Ms. Carrillo said she would take this to IT.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked who controls the WiFi in buildings and whether the concrete walls at Winter Hill will make renovation more challenging. Dir. Hamel said that the school department IT handles WiFi, and the concrete will add difficulty in terms of increased cost.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

10. 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.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked for a summary of what was done during the pandemic. Dir. Raiche said work was exclusively targeted to COVID - i.e., moving and filtering air. No work was done on the chillers or boilers. He said they were able to balance rooms and confirm the number of air changes per hour, and for the small number of rooms that did not hit target exchange rates, mobile HEPA filters were deployed. The team also installed CO2 monitors to understand the exchange of air and when to turn on HEPA units. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if electrical updates would be needed for those mobile units, to which Dir. Raiche said in some cases. He talked about

tactics to ensure adequate ventilation for wellness rooms and others that needed extra filtration.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked for a summary of the work in a memo. Dir. Raiche replied that it would take considerable work to sort through the archives to write the memo, and when sponsored by Chair Gomez Mouakad to speak, Ms. Pitone of the School Committee offered to write the summary and have Dir. Raiche confirm the details.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

11. 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.

Ms. Carrillo said that the memo she provided did include information about Winter Hill, and that the meeting with the PTA Council will also address the school. Chair Gomez Mouakad said she didn't think the memo made reference to the elevator, chiller or leak. Dir. Raiche added that this item predated the FY22 budget as well as this committee itself, and is one of the reasons the city embarked on one of two feasibility studies.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked for a memo addressing specific concerns about the elevator and chiller in the Winter Hill School. Ms. Carrillo said she would work with DPW to get that done.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

12. Order
(ID # [22-1122](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly and Councilor Clingan
That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management report on all major repairs and work orders for the Winter Hill Community School and the Brown School over the past five years.

Commissioner Lathan said that they are working as a team with IAM on this item and are still developing something to share with the committee. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked for a memo on major repairs, defined as anything \$500,000 or over. Ms. Carrillo said that the Administration had submitted a memo, but there was confusion as to what constituted a major repair.

Councilor Davis said that he had put in requests for a centralized database for school buildings and asked if that existed. Dir. Raiche answered that the database is in progress and will extend to every single asset of the city, including manhole covers and water fountains. There have been biweekly meetings with the Mayor to build that database out. Chair Gomez Mouakad commented on Chelsea's public list of major ongoing school projects and

said that kind of solution helps with transparency.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Laura Pitone of the School Committee to speak. Ms. Pitone said that their goal was to be more proactive in comprehensive maintenance planning and asked if that should be a separate order, to which Chair Gomez Mouakad answered yes.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED