



## CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

KATJANA BALLANTYNE

MAYOR

### MEMORANDUM

**To:** School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee

**From:** Department of Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM) and Department of Public Works (DPW)

**Date:** June 28, 2023

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The following memorandum provides responses to various City Council Resolutions & Orders directed to the Department of Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM) and Department of Public Works appearing on the 28 June 2023 meeting agenda of the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Joint Committee of the City Council and School Committee.

**Agenda Item 2. Resolution (ID # 23-0972) – That the Administration expedite the planning, design and construction of the Winter Hill Community Innovation School to ensure the re-opening of said school as soon as possible.**

Since the passing of the FY2023 budget, addressing the legacy school building issues and deferred maintenance has been a top priority for the IAM Capital Projects Division. This has been a two-pronged effort. One prong is retro-commissioning, or “stress testing,” HVAC equipment in all the schools built since the 1990s to proactively replace failing or failed equipment and systems. The other prong is the creation of a K-8 Master Plan that projects districtwide programming needs, evaluates the capability of the City’s current building portfolio to meet those needs, and defines viable construction projects to fill any gaps between those needs and capabilities. That K-8 Master Plan is essential not only for the purposes of Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) eligibility, but also to define the scope of a construction project or projects needed for the City to progress to the next phases of design and construction. Without the K-8 Master Plan offering a comprehensive strategy, the City could wind up constructing a building that is programmatically obsolete on the day it opens and/or need to manage multiple uncoordinated and inefficient construction projects that are reactive rather than proactive – creating unnecessary delays, costs, and substandard solutions that do not serve the district well.

Those efforts are critical to advancing the planning, design, and construction of building renovations and/or new buildings to serve the long-term needs of the Winter Hill Community Innovation School (WHCIS), the Brown School, and any gaps between districtwide programming needs and building capacity at the other schools—including growing demand for appropriate teaching space for neurodiverse students. While the delay in receiving the final Enrollment Study impacted the schedule for the K-8 Master Plan, Capital Projects and Somerville Public Schools (SPS) staff are now progressing the project as quickly as possible, and



the leadership teams of the Administration and SPS have frequent check-in meetings to ensure the team has all resources necessary to progress the work. Additionally, the FY2024 budget added a Senior Project Manager in the Capital Projects Division dedicated to the project, and also appropriated \$1.3M from “Free Cash” via Stabilization to self-fund the Feasibility Study, thereby fast-tracking the project beyond typical MSBA milestone dates. This combination of funding, staff resources, departmental priorities, and leadership attention reflects the Administration’s commitment to opening the doors of a new or renovated schools as quickly as responsibly possible.

**Agenda Item 3. Order (ID # 23-0984) – That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management and the Commissioner of Public Works present to this City Council, the building failures that took place in the Winter Hill Community Innovation School and a plan for assessing those failures.**

Please see attached letter from our structural engineering consultant reporting the initial findings of the building failure. Our consulting team is now conducting the more intensive investigations, and we will report those findings once available.

**Agenda Item 4. Order (ID # 23-0985) – That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management dedicate full time staff and/or create new position(s) to the planning, design and construction process for the Winter Hill Community Innovation School and the Benjamin Brown School and include this position in the FY 2024 budget.**

The final FY2024 includes a new Senior Project Manager (SPM) in the Capital Projects division dedicated to the school building project. Reflective of the Division’s priorities, Capital Projects is filling this position internally for an immediate start and will backfill the vacated position to focus on other projects.

**Agenda Item 5. Order (ID # 23-0986) – That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management work with the School Department to create milestones for the academic programming needed for the planning and design of a new school building or for retrofitting an existing school building, and create a parallel collaboration program, meeting weekly or bi-weekly, to move this work forward.**

Capital Projects and SPS are currently working as a well-integrated team on this effort. We have both standing and topic-specific meetings scheduled. The SPM is following up regularly on task assignments to ensure work is accomplished between meetings, and the Directors of Capital Projects and IAM are attentive to the project, clearing administrative hurdles and ensuring that staff throughout the organization are attentive to the project’s needs.

**Agenda Item 6. Order (ID # 23-0987) – That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management explain what Request for Proposals (RFP) will be necessary for consultant services for planning and architectural services for any future school building programming and planning and expedite those RFPs.**



Once the K-8 Master Plan defines the general size of the building or buildings that need to be renovated or constructed, the sites feasible to support that construction, and the temporary facilities required to facilitate that construction, the City will develop two RFP's, one for an Owner's Project Manager (OPM), and one for a Designer. That OPM and Designer will then be our partners from the Feasibility Study phase all the way through the end of construction. For any public building construction project, the City would first hire the OPM, and then the OPM would assist in Designer selection. Typically, these two steps in the process are completed once the City is invited into the MSBA process and the MSBA approves the selections.

As the K-8 Master Plan nears completion, we will begin drafting the RFQ for OPM services. We have communicated to the MSBA that we intend to proceed to the Feasibility Study phase as quickly as possible, and therefore we will potentially need to select an OPM and Designer before being formally invited into the MSBA process. This will expedite the schedule, but we will do so while satisfying the MSBA requirements to the best of our ability to reserve our retroactive eligibility.

**Agenda Item 7. Resolution (ID # 23-0988) – That the Administration work with the School Department to develop emergency plans for at-risk school relocation including, but not limited to, the Winter Hill Community Innovation School and the Benjamin Brown School.**

The Administration is in full swing of a multi-departmental effort to relocate the WHCIS to the Ederly for the start of the next school year. This effort includes the relocation of staff currently housed at the Ederly (SPS, Parks & Recreation, and other departments) to temporary locations including the Tufts Administration Building (a.k.a., TAB). Investigations of other candidate properties for the WHCIS relocation identified locations that would not work for WHCIS but may work for the Brown School, such as the Cummings School, the Matignon School in Cambridge, and the Saint Clements High School in Medford. The Administration is preparing plans to leverage those properties in the event of a coincident emergency at the Brown School. It is important to note that investigation of the envelope and structural features at the Brown do not indicate concerns at the Brown, rather this is contingency planning for unexpected scenarios.

**Agenda Item 8. Resolution (ID # 23-0989) - That the Administration create a permanent staff position for a Superintendent of School Buildings within the Department of Public Works to oversee all maintenance, repairs and assessments of school buildings, and include this position in the FY 2024 Budget.**

Over the past 3 years, DPW has recognized the need for increased oversight of the City's Buildings inventory. Since FY22, the DPW has requested and successfully added the following positions to increase capacities for buildings maintenance, including the maintenance of School Buildings:

FY22 added 3 new supervisory positions:



- Divided Buildings and Grounds into two divisions, significantly increasing the oversight of the Buildings Division by adding the new position, “Buildings Superintendent.”
- Added a Preventative Maintenance Manager to develop a preventative maintenance program for Schools and City Buildings, including HVAC and other buildings systems.
- Added a Daytime Supervisor of Custodians specifically in response to the Schools’ increasing maintenance needs and to supervise custodial staff in contractors.

FY23 DPW added 3 floating custodial employees to maintain buildings, including School Buildings.

FY24 proposed the addition of a Buildings System Manager to add project management capacity and additional supervision of projects and contractors to the Buildings Division. Because the DPW has added these positions, which strategically meet the needs called for in the proposed position, the Department does not feel it is appropriate to request a Superintendent of School Buildings.

**Agenda Item 9. Resolution (ID # 23-0990) - That the Administration evaluate the need to create permanent staff positions within the Department of Public Works for school buildings that address the highest needs of our school buildings including, but not limited to: mechanical systems, plumbing systems, fire alarm and electrical systems and exterior envelope and structural systems.**

Over the last 2 years DPW has invested in several positions including a Building Superintendent and a Preventive Maintenance Manager. For FY24, given the enormous needs of our aging facilities we have created a Buildings Systems Manager position. This position oversees and establishes the preventative maintenance of all facilities, schools, and utility systems, such as refrigeration, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) plumbing, emergency generators, fire protection, and electrical systems. This position will also work hand in hand with capital projects making recommendations regarding repair vs. replacement.

**Agenda Item 10. Resolution (ID # 23-0991) – That the Administration include in the FY 2024 budget, \$150,000 for an exterior envelope consultant to assess ongoing leaks in school buildings.**

This item can be accommodated within Capital Projects’ Capital Outlay Architecture/Engineering line. We will incorporate envelope evaluations into our work at the post-1990s buildings.

**Agenda Item 11. Resolution (ID # 23-0992) – That the Administration develop a five-year assessment plan for school building systems and structures for all schools over five years old, to ensure proper funding is in place for capital repairs and to ensure the safety and uninterrupted operation of schools.**



This effort is essentially underway as described in the response to Resolution (ID # 23-0972) above as the first prong of addressing legacy building issues. The HVAC systems are the systems most in need of attention and are therefore the first focus of our efforts. As described in the response to Resolution (ID # 23-0991) above, we will also add envelope evaluations to those ongoing efforts. In parallel to our ongoing Pavement Management Program, we anticipate a continuing, routine investigation of the buildings to follow this first, intensive testing of those systems.

**Agenda Item 12. Resolution (ID # 23-0993) - That the Administration publish yearly on the city website, a list of ongoing school repairs and improvements, similar to that posted by Chelsea Public Schools, and provide a yearly report to the City Council of such repairs and improvements before and after completion.**

City and SPS Communications are working with IAM and DPW on standing up webpages for all schools -- and especially for Winter Hill and the Brown -- to track Capital Projects and planning. They are exploring options for efficiently and accurately updating the public on repairs, maintenance, and upgrades on these sites, and expect to be able to accommodate this request.



06/05/2023

Melissa Woods  
Director, Capital Projects Somerville  
1 Franey Road  
Somerville, MA 02145

RE: Concrete  
Silman Project No 19887.03

Dear Ms. Woods:

Sylvester Black of Silman visited the north-west stairwell at the Winter Hill Community School (115 Sycamore street in Somerville, MA) on May 31, 2023 at the request of Beyer Blinder Belle, to review a piece of concrete which separated from the west edge of a precast roof plank and fell to the floor.

Prior to observing the area, we met with a group of teachers, administrators and site personnel representing years of direct experience with the building. They stated that water has regularly come into the building throughout their tenure.

In most locations where water marks or peeling paint indicate that water has infiltrated or continues to infiltrate into the building, the distress appears at first glance to be cosmetic, with little outward indication of deterioration other than peeling paint. However, if the water infiltration issue is as frequent and wide-spread as it was described, it is possible for portions of concrete to have become saturated and or to have frozen while saturated in the winter.

That water infiltration has been occurring and is a problem that should be addressed is certain. However, whether that water damage is or is not the specific cause of the concrete break that occurred is less certain. We do not know why this particular portion of this particular plank broke off on the day it did. It occurred when the school was empty, following one of the first warmer periods of the year, and on a day that was somewhat windy, but we cannot say whether the wind or heat contributed. The fact that the plank in question looks relatively undamaged compared to other areas that appear more corroded raises concern that similar breaks could occur in other parts of the building without warning.

Conclusion:

Next steps should include a comprehensive study of the building, conducted not just by a structural engineer, but also by an envelopes expert. We would anticipate such a study to include observations and/or probes at multiple locations, particularly where the roof structure meets walls and parapets, and where significant water infiltration is evident: (Peeling paint, discolored ceiling tiles, rust stains). Probes at the roof will likely require cutting through the roof membrane and insulation to reveal the slab's top-side and edge condition. While there may be some non-destructive evaluation options available with appropriate equipment, we expect it will at some point become necessary to penetrate the existing roof membrane for probes or to effect repairs.



Sincerely,

Sylvester Black  
Senior Project Engineer  
Silman