

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

November 18, 2002 REGULAR MEETING

November 18, 2002

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Dennis Sullivan called a Regular Meeting of the School Committee to order in the aldermanic chambers at 8:05 p.m., with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

II. ROLL CALL

Present were Ms. Cardoso, Ms. Murray, Mayor Gay, Ms. Bauer, Ms. Harris, Ms. Taylor, Alderman White, Ms. Rossetti and Mr. Sullivan.

No one was absent.

III. AWARDS AND CITATIONS

There were no presentations made this evening.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes were approved as follows by voice vote:

November 4, 2002:

- Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole

November 4, 2002:

- Regular Meeting

V. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

Student representative Kim Carvalho reported on the following items this evening:

The seniors are now beginning their college applications for next year. Ms. Carvalho stated that it is a lot of work but the students are all very excited about doing this.

The next event being held at the high school is the annual Thanksgiving Day Rally. Preparations have begun, cans are being collected, and links are being sold.

Ms. Carvalho wished the football team good luck on their last football game of the season.

VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

Dr. Argenziano reported on the following items:

1. Reminded all members of the revised meeting schedule that was provided in their packets. During tonight's earlier Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole meeting, a Long Range Planning Committee of the Whole meeting was scheduled for December 5, 2002, at 7:00 p.m.

VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT (cont.)

2. The 5th Annual Career Fair was held last Thursday, November 14, 2002 in the Atrium and Field House between 1:00 and 3:30 p.m. As soon as this information was received, the Superintendent of Schools provided it to members in their packet. Dr. Argenziano reported there was a good turn out, and mentioned that the Barbizon Modeling table had the most students, male and female in attendance. The Superintendent thanked Mr. Stephen O'Leary and Ms. Juana Gayle-Flores for organizing the Career Fair.
3. Enclosed is information from Mr. Robert A. Snow, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment, regarding the school committee's request for an overview of major school-based responsibilities aligned with curriculum, instruction and assessment.. When items are approved this evening, Dr. Argenziano will provide what is needed to the Principals at the next monthly Principals meeting.
4. Also provided to members were two articles - 1) The School Renewal Fallacy and 2) Unrecognized Warning Signs (an article on hate words).
5. The annual Winter Concert is scheduled for December 11, 2002 at 7:00 p.m.
6. School Council Minutes for the Edgerly School and the Kennedy School are enclosed.
7. Reminded members that the Bi-Annual Awards Ceremony is scheduled for Monday evening, November 25, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. Information will be provided to members listing the scheduled times for students and teachers, by school, to appear. Citations are being prepared for staff and students in recognition of their outstanding accomplishments. The Superintendent informed the community of the large number of students who are in the advanced status of our MCAS examination and every one of those students will be receiving a citation.
8. A copy of the January 1, 2000 – December 31, 2002 Custodial Contract is provided for members.

VII. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

- A. ***Ed. Programs and Instruction Subcommittee:*** Ms. Murray (Nov. 6)

Subject discussed:

- ✓ Program of Studies
- ✓ MCAS Scores
- ✓ Advanced Placement Courses and Services
- ✓ Approval of In-Service Courses

Approved motions from Subcommittee:

- To direct the Superintendent of Schools to have Principals include in the school improvement plans their plans to meet the goals in the No Child Left Behind Act report coming from the State at the end of November.

VII. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES (cont.)

Ed. Programs and Instruction Subcommittee (cont.):

- To direct Mr. Thomas F. Galligani, Headmaster, Somerville High School and the High School Council, to give the Superintendent of Schools and school committee members their opinion on the added credit to GPA given to students who take AP classes and report back to the Ed. Programs and Instruction Subcommittee sometime in January.

Ms. Murray reported there were no in-service courses submitted for approval that evening.

B. **Rules Management Subcommittee:** Ms. Taylor (Nov. 13)

Subjects discussed:

- ✓ K-12 – Excused Absences/Unexcused Absences Policy; Make-Up policy

Approved motions from Subcommittee:

- to add language from the Department of Education memorandum received from Commissioner Driscoll and two sentences from the Arlington Public Schools Policy to the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual, as follows:

Addendum to Attendance Policy for Grades K – 12

“State and federal law require schools to make reasonable accommodation to the religious needs of students and employees in observance of holy days. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151B, section 4(1)(A) addresses this issue with respect to employees. With respect to students, Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151C, Section 2B reads in relevant part as follows:

Any student in an educational or vocational training institution...who is unable, because of his religious beliefs, to attend classes or to participate in any examination, study or work requirement on a particular day shall be excused from any such examination or study or work requirement, and shall be provided with any opportunity to make up such examination, study or work requirement which he may have missed because of such absence on any particular day; provided, however, that such makeup examination or work shall not create an unreasonable burden upon such school. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the institution for making available to the said student such opportunity. No adverse or prejudicial effects shall result to any student because of his availing himself of the provisions of this section.

Schools may meet their obligation to accommodate students by excusing individual absences for religious observance, or by adjusting the school calendar to provide a school year of at least 180 school days, while taking into account possible days of low attendance due to religious holidays.”

(cont.)

VII. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES (cont.)

Rules Management Subcommittee (cont.):

"Absences due to observance of major religious holidays will not be included as absences for the purpose of attendance awards or recognition. Accordingly, parents/guardians will provide a written explanation for the absence and tardiness of a child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible."

MOTION: Ms. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Mr. Sullivan, that this new policy becomes effective immediately as part of the Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual and will be placed in all guides and handbooks for the September 2003 school year, and the motion was approved by voice vote.

Ms. Taylor spoke of another policy change that went into effect this year but has not yet been added to the policy book. Because of changing to the rotating block five period schedule, now students in the high school are allowed four absences per quarter before they face the possibility of failure due to attendance.

- ✓ Project 10 East – Hate Crimes

Ms. Taylor reported that lengthy discussion took place regarding the issue of treatment of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender students at the high school. This came about out of a meeting in early September, following a hate crime in Davis Square. Ms. Taylor summarized what steps are being taken and how the matter is being handled at the high school.

C. **Long Range Planning Committee of the Whole:** Mr. Sullivan (Nov. 14)

Subject discussed:

- ✓ Pre-Response Conference with School Committee

Mr. Sullivan reported that no vendors appeared before the school committee at the Long Range Planning Committee meeting held on November 14th. The only response received, via a letter sent by courier, was from the New England School Development Council (NESDEC). The item was placed on the agenda for further discussion to take place at the November 18, 2002 Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole meeting.

D. **Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole:** Ms. Rossetti (Nov. 18)

Subject discussed:

- ✓ Quarterly Operations Expenditures
- ✓ Lincoln Park Community School Educational Specifications
- ✓ Comprehensive Study of Somerville Public Schools PK-8

D. ***Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole:*** (cont.)

Approved motions from Committee of the Whole:

- To approve the revised educational specifications for the Lincoln Park Community School at 74,700 sq. ft. to be constructed on the current site and the motion was approved by a roll call vote of: Yes–9–Cardoso, Murray, Gay, Bauer, Harris, Taylor, White, Rossetti and Sullivan.
- To move forward with the Comprehensive Study of the Somerville Public Schools PK-8 Long Range Master Plan of School Facilities utilizing the quoted contract process for under \$25,000.00 and the motion was approved by a roll call vote of: Yes–5–Gay, Bauer, Harris, White and Sullivan; No–4–Cardoso, Murray, Taylor and Rossetti.

As a result of the above motion passing, the Superintendent of Schools informed the committee we would be meeting December 5, 2002 with the vendors who will be bidding on this project in order to continue the timeline that has been drafted and that the final decision will be handed to the school committee on January 25, 2003 in order to make the necessary decisions for the future building use of the Somerville Public Schools.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. **Board of Alderman Resolution**

Ms. Murray referred to a Resolution dated October 10, 2002 from the Board of Alderman regarding a meeting of the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council. Ms. Murray mentioned that she spoke to a few Alderman and they informed her they did not know about the Resolution. Per Ms. Murray's request, Alderman White clarified the issue and explained how the resolution came about.

B. **Meeting with President Bacow of Tufts University**

As a follow-up to a recent meeting with President Bacow of Tufts University, Ms. Rossetti informed members she was disappointed with his statement relative to our student's not being awarded scholarships. She advised that she will soon be requesting a one-on-one meeting with President Bacow and the Dean of Admissions. Ms. Rossetti welcomed any members who are interested to join her when the meeting takes place.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A. **SHS Diploma**

Headmaster, Thomas F. Galligani, recommended that the following student, who has successfully completed the requirements for graduation from Somerville High School, be awarded his diploma: George Mercuri. Approved by voice vote.

B. **Field Trips** – Approved by voice vote.

Nov. 25, 2002: Mrs. Apostolakos, Mrs. Filosi, Grades 11 & 12, Somerville High School, to Providence, RI. Transportation by bus, no cost to students.

IX. NEW BUSINESS (cont.)

C. Boston Globe Article

Ms. Rossetti referred to a November 10th article in the education section of the Boston Globe. Listed in the article were numerous communities and what they are doing with AP. As a follow-up to the last Ed. Programs and Instruction Subcommittee meeting, Ms. Rossetti asked Mr. Snow to find out what type of AP credit is given in those communities so the school committee will have that information when further discussion is continued in January.

X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

Ms. Cardoso

1. Reminded the public that this week is American Education Week. Schools are open to the public and Ms. Cardoso encouraged everyone to visit the schools to look at the programs offered.
2. The Special Education PAC Advisory Council meeting is this Wednesday, November 20, 2002 at the Kennedy School, teacher's conference room, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.
3. The Lincoln Park Community School is holding their first PTA meeting and conferences this Thursday, November 21, 2002 at 6:30 p.m.
4. Somerville High School's Football Mothers Club raffle night is this Friday, November 22, 2002 at the Dante Club from 7:00-11:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10.00.
5. Ms. Cardoso wished her colleagues and the public a very Happy Thanksgiving holiday.

Ms. Murray

1. Thursday evening, 7:00 p.m. at the Brown School, Ms. Yvonne E. Gunzburger, Supervisor of Reading will be highlighting several events happening this week for *American Education Week*. Ms. Murray encouraged the public to attend and to also visit the schools.
2. Informed the public about support and excellent outreach groups that are sponsored by the Council for Children and the Somerville Family Network. Flyers were distributed during the Childhood Advisory Council meeting held on November 5th. Ms. Murray encouraged parents to take a look at the different support groups offered and encouraged attendance at any of these scheduled meetings. For information, you may call 617-629-8700.
3. Wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving holiday.

Mayor Gay

1. Wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving holiday.
2. Mayor Gay thanked the Superintendent of Schools for moderating last week's very important community meeting that was held at the East Somerville Community School concerning the gang related issues. She also thanked Chairman Sullivan for his participation, as well as the

X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS (cont.)

Mayor Gay

School Committee and Board of Aldermen members who were in attendance. Mayor Gay reported on the issues surrounding the gang problems in Somerville. She informed the public of the plans that have been put in place and talked about the task force and the added services established. There is still a lot of work to be done and the Mayor advised the public she will continue to deal with this matter, along with the Police Chief, and the Board of Aldermen. The Mayor thanked everyone involved for their support and advised that this is not an issue just for Ward I, and that we, as a City, have to deal with this matter and all of us working together can overcome some of these issues.

3. Mayor Gay thanked the schools that she visited the last few days and expressed how much she enjoyed reading for the classes. The Mayor was at the Powder House Community School last Thursday and read to two of the classes. She was at East Somerville Community School today and will be visiting the West Somerville Neighborhood School tomorrow, November 19th.

Ms. Bauer

1. Reported that the Winter Hill Community School PTA Holiday Store is open all week. This is a great opportunity for students to do inexpensive holiday shopping while also supporting field trips and other PTA sponsored activities.
2. On Wednesday, November 27, 2002, all children in grades K-3 at the Cummings School will receive a free book at a RIF book party coordinated by reading teacher, Michelle Perry, with the help from PTA president, Tammy McAllister. Books were purchased using the Reading is Fundamental Grant received by the school department and the PTA.
3. Reported that the first meeting of the *Hispanic Parents Group*, facilitated by Maria Madrid, was held last Friday morning at the Cummings School. There was an excellent turnout. Parents voiced aspirations and concerns; want their children to develop leadership skills, which is difficult because many children are not completely comfortable in their second language. Another meeting, which will also include the children, is scheduled for Wednesday, December 4, 2002 at 12:30 p.m. Plans include starting a Spanish language kid-produced newspaper.

Ms. Harris

1. Reminded members of dates for the Personnel Subcommittee Meetings:
 - ✓ Thursday, November 21, 2002, 7:00 p.m. – Superintendent of Schools of will make his presentation to the school committee.
 - ✓ November 25, 2002 – Completed evaluations are to be returned to Ms. Harris.
 - ✓ December 3, 2002, 7:00 p.m. – Superintendent of Schools evaluation.
 - ✓ December 12, 2002, 7:00 p.m. – Executive Session meeting.
2. Monday, November 25, 2002, 6:30 p.m. is the Healey School PTA. A number of guest speakers will be present.

X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS (cont.)

Ms. Harris

3. Expressed her thanks to the different readers for their participation in reading to classes at the Healey School during American Education week.

Ms. Taylor

1. This is American Education week and Ms. Taylor wanted to express her thanks to the teachers and staff for all they do, not just this week, but all year long.
2. Announced that pies are for sale at the Highlander Café for the Thanksgiving Holiday.
3. The Somerville High School Highlanders home game is 10:00 a.m. at Hormel Stadium and Ms. Taylor wished the team good luck.

Alderman White

1. Reported he was happy to hear that Mayor Gay announced she was going to convene a task force to deal with absentee landlords, as he has been the author of a couple of Resolutions that the Board of Aldermen unanimously passed asking for that. It is the Board of Aldermen's belief that the task force in absentee landlords can tackle a lot of the problems that occur, one in particular is the issue of housing illegal units.

Ms. Rossetti

1. Reminded everyone that the Track PAC is hosting their annual Craft Fair next Saturday, November 30, 2002 at the Eugene Brune Field House from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. There will be over 130 crafters from throughout the New England area at the fair.
2. The West Somerville Neighborhood School PTA will be held this Wednesday, November 20, 2002 at 6:30 p.m.
3. Ms. Rossetti thanked Title I for supporting reading awareness by sponsoring a recent author's visit to the Powder House Community School. The author's presentation held the attention of all students.
4. Reported that she and Ms. Bauer attended a session at the Winter Hill Community School last week, regarding a Comprehensive School Reform Grant the school received and thanked Mrs. Hilliard for the invitation. Mrs. Hilliard and the staff chose a company by the name of "Connect" to work with to help increase the test scores school wide in their building. Ms. Rossetti asked Mr. Snow to invite the company to a future Ed. Programs and Instruction Subcommittee meeting, after a year's time, to discuss their progress.
5. Ms. Rossetti Reported she will be reading to Ms. McCarthy's Kindergarten class at the Powder House Community School this Friday and to the West Somerville Neighborhood School Kindergarteners on Wednesday, November 27th.
6. Encouraged parents to visit our school this week, American Education Week.

X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS (cont.)

Ms. Rossetti

7. Encouraged the public to attend next Monday's Awards Ceremony Night, November 25, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall.

XI. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no items of communication this evening.

XII. PERSONNEL

There was no Personnel Report submitted for this evening's meeting.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:34 p.m., by voice vote.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano
Secretary