

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

Monday, May 5, 2025 - Regular Meeting

7:00 p.m. – City Hall Chambers

Members present: Ms. Pitone (arrived at 7:08), Dr. Ackman, Mr. Biton, Ms. Barish, Dr. Phillips, and Ms. Krepchin.

Members Absent: President Pineda Neufeld, Mayor Ballantyne, and Mr. Green

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 with a moment of silence, followed by a salute to the flag of the United States of America. Chair Krepchin asked Superintendent Carmona to call the roll, the results of which were as follows: PRESENT – 6 –Ms. Pitone (arrived at 7:08), Dr. Ackman, Mr. Biton, Ms. Barish, Dr. Phillips, and Ms. Krepchin

ABSENT –Mr. Green, President Pineda Neufeld, Mayor Ballantyne,

Chair Krepchin asked interpreters to introduce themselves:

Addy Penate-Spanish

Vanusa Teixeira -Portuguese

Angie Surpris-Haitian Creole

II. REPORT OF STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Student Representative Thiago Betti & Jampa were both present and reported the following:

- Senior Prom
- Graduation will take place at TUFT

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments

IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

Superintendent Dr. Carmona shared his district report which was as follows

Teacher Appreciation Week

Good evening, everyone. I want to start tonight's meeting by acknowledging Teacher Appreciation Week, which starts today. Every day our teachers inspire, support, and educate the next generation in Somerville.

Here in our district, we have a team of dedicated, talented and inspiring teachers in PK to 12th grade classrooms, and on to adult education. The hard work of teachers has an invaluable impact on the lives of students and keeps them on the path to academic and personal success.

We all remember the impact our favorite teachers had on our own lives. That is why I am so honored to take a moment out of this meeting to sincerely thank each and every teacher in our district.

Principal Appreciation Day

Also, last Thursday was Principal Appreciation Day. I want to recognize and celebrate the incredible leadership, dedication, and heart our principals bring to their schools every single day.

Our principals are more than just administrators—they are instructional leaders, student advocates, community builders, and mentors. They guide their school communities with vision and compassion, navigating challenges with resilience and celebrating successes with joy.

To each of our principals: thank you for the countless hours you invest, for the thoughtful decisions you make, and for the care and commitment you show to students, families, and staff.

*Exciting News- The Highlander Cafe set to reopen

I am also excited to announce that the student-run Highlander Cafe will reopen for a few dates before the end of the school year. For those who remember, this cafe is student-run by our Culinary Arts students, who cook, serve, and maintain the restaurant. I will get back to you when we have more information about their public hours so you can find a time to visit Somerville High School for this unique dining experience.

Student and Staff Achievements

- 36 juniors and seniors qualified for the Seal of Biliteracy certification. Congratulations to our world language learners and their educators!

Tonight's Agenda

- Tonight, we'll begin with a presentation from our Director of Basic Needs and Housing Support, Regina Bertholdo, and our Basic Needs Social Worker, Jen Ochoa. They will talk to us about what they are seeing in terms of need and use for some of our most vulnerable students.
- Then, we will hear about
- other SFLC teams.
 - Specifically, SFLC Director Ruth Santos will talk about our School-based Family and Community Liaisons.
 - Our District Volunteer Coordinator will talk about the work being done in classrooms and schools by our wonderful community volunteers.
- To wrap up our presentations, Career and Technical Education Director Jim Hachey will talk about the excellent work happening in our CTE programs.

With that, I'll turn it over to Regina

SFLC Director asked if the SFLC Liaison and Volunteer could go first

- **SFLC Liaisons**

Ruth Santos introduced her Liaison Department Team. The presentation will focus on the hard work that takes place behind the scenes.

Heidi Castro, Liaison at the Healey school, spoke to the integration of the team.

Telma Leitao, Liaison of the Argenziano, spoke to the collaboration with SPS Staff

Liaison at the brown and WSNS spoke about collaboration with the community

See presentation below

Questions/ Comments

Chair Krepchin- made a clarification that the numbers were down due to fewer resources, not because there were fewer needs.

Ruth Santos: That is correct.

Ms. Pitone- How do we fund this? Traditionally, is this money that comes from the city to pay for the Carrot card or the MBTA card?

Ruth Santos, the AARP-funded city programs

Dr. Ackman- thank you appreciate the work that you all do. the Free food market, should we be able to continue it? are there thoughts about trying to add another school or ways to find a way to fund part of it, Do we have additional partnerships?

Lianne King - we have talked about adding a third site We used to have a site at Winter Hill when it was in the middle of the City. As a team, right now we don't know if we can support another market. Options have been explored, but at this time we have decided that it doesn't make sense

Ms Barish- is the market being prioritized by the SFLC or by the city I'm trying to understand why it is that the market might be able to continue but the other programs might not.

Ruth Santos- in terms of cost, the market is obviously more affordable and it is open to everyone. It's also a key piece for outreach to the families

- **Volunteers**

Jen Capuano, SFLC Volunteer Coordinator, shares the presentation (presentation below)

Mr. Biton- do we have enough volunteers at our schools to meet the request for volunteers that are coming from our parents and teachers at this time? and if not, what is that gap what is the ratio?

Jen- Absolutely, we can accommodate every request. It usually depends on when they want it scheduled, typically during X block, academic lab, or mid-day. We do have volunteers who are working in a hybrid capacity.

Ms Barish- It is really important that we are aware of how much it really costs to support our students.

Jen- We capture the number of hours served by each of our volunteers and how long they serve for.

Dr. Phillips- a few years ago we talked about the challenges on getting teachers really excited about volunteers and reaching out and requesting volunteers since you have a huge stable of people who want to give their time. Would you be able to provide us an update about how this is going?

Jen- Two years ago, we launched an online request form. We realize that teachers need to shop for specifically of what they want, subject, grade, and language preference, it is working in some cases. Teachers are still strapped for time, and it does take time to support a volunteer. We can't just take a volunteer who is not trained and doesn't have the curriculum or any study guide

Dr Phillips- is there anything that you think we or the district should be doing to support teachers to use more volunteers

Jen- we are working on doing professional development and use that as a resource

Ms. Barish- given the time and investment that it takes a teacher to onboard a volunteer, are there specific challenges to retention?

Jen- this is a community that is constantly changing, and people move in and out. We do have retirees who are moving in. Retention is huge.

- **Basic Needs and Housing Support Services**

Regina Bertholdo and Jen Ochoa shared the Basic Needs and Housing Support Services presentation (presentation below)

Dr Phillips- Thank you, we are so lucky both.

Dr. Ackman- I'm curious—my understanding (please correct me if I'm wrong) is that for families on the cusp of homelessness, gaining access to stable housing is just the beginning. They still need support in order to remain housed. Could you speak more to the additional resources these families may need?

Jen- Oftentimes, we meet families when they're in crisis, and in those moments, there's so much brain fog. It's honestly very impressive to see the transformation once a family is placed into permanent, safe housing it's like everything starts to come back to them.

While we may not stay in contact as frequently afterward, they know they can reach out to us for anything they need. You really start to see them pick themselves back up, which is both heartwarming and a little bittersweet for us, because we often wonder how they're doing.

Housing is such a fundamental need. Once people have that stability, they can begin to move forward with their lives. We still support families in small ways, helping those who've never had an apartment get internet service, or showing them how to use certain appliances, but that level of support is minimal compared to what's needed when we first meet them.

Regina -Added that by housing, they mean subsidized housing, something that they should be able to afford here in Somerville.

Mr. Biton-students who were placed in permanent housing outside of Somerville are they still eligible to attend Somerville public schools or do they transition to another district

Regina- If a student experiencing homelessness becomes permanently housed during the school year, they may remain in their current school for the rest of that school year, with transportation provided, if the parent chooses. However, once the new school year begins, the student must enroll in the local school district where they are now housed. If permanent housing is secured during the summer break, the student must register locally for the new school year.

Mr. Biton-thank you um another question uh we heard from the liaison group about the ending of the carrot cards and the MBTA parent uh subsidy we heard from you about the potential end of the uh guaranteed basic income program so a lot of safety net ARPA funded programs just coming to an end I think I know the answer to this but I would just love to hear you hear it from you about how do you think the ends of these safety net programs for our students and families how is that likely to affect our families experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness and bumping them to potentially you know greater risk for experiencing homelessness can you talk a little bit about that effect.

Jen- Many of our families have relied on multiple support programs, and those who are now permanently housed often did so through the municipal voucher program, which provides deeply affordable rental subsidies. These subsidies are effective, especially since they adjust with a family's income, offering stability even during financial setbacks. While ending ARPA-funded programs like food subsidies will impact families especially given rising food costs some supports, like the monthly food markets, will continue and remain well-attended. Moving forward, the focus should shift toward long-term housing advocacy at the city and state level, since permanent solutions like subsidized housing are what truly make a lasting difference.

Regina - When I said at the beginning that you know the success with the with the GBI the guaranteed basic income and the housing the municipal voucher program or even the subsidized housing that a lot of our families got and we stabilize those families so much that up to now you don't hear from them so it's what people need subsidized housing

nobody's asking for anything for free it's subsidized housing especially up here in the north when we live such an expensive life it's the subsidies and extra income so they can make ends meet everybody's working but then you just give them that stab that so much stability and I think this is this is the recipe for many communities just to break down that poverty cycle and give this families and these children a chance with a lot of stability

Ms. Pitone- I really appreciate how you presented the data with context—it's not just about numbers going up or down, but about how we're identifying and supporting more students and families in need. The increase shows the district is doing its job well. I also value the proactive work to support families earlier, especially those facing new challenges like job or income loss. Your combination of data, heart, and compassion is deeply appreciated. Thank you for meeting families where they are and helping them move forward.

Ms. Barish thank you um I'm just realizing I think um Miss Capuano also mentioned uh the role of professional development in these success stories and maybe this is a question for our administration but I'm just curious about are there or maybe you have thoughts are there other areas in which or maybe Ms. Santos has thoughts other areas in which professional development for our broader staff could help us better support families or does it seem like we've kind of got it figured out where we are now

Ms. Santos- so we are working on doing more comprehensive um professional development for educators throughout SFLC regina and Jenn are in the second year of having done the um McKinney Vento um professional development we are going to be working with Jen Capuano on doing some more how to work with volunteers and how and also training volunteers to use existing curriculum as well and Tina and I have just started a family engagement professional development um which focuses on how to communicate with families best practices how to use plain language how to meet families where they're at and we just worked one-on-one with different educators around some of the challenges that they're facing and um plan to roll that out more broadly in the fall.

- **CTE Presentation**

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to speak about Somerville High School's Career and Technical Education (CTE) program. My name is Tom Bent, Chair of the CTE General Advisory Committee and founder of Bent Electrical Contractors in Somerville.

As required by Massachusetts law (Chapter 27, Section 2), the committee must meet annually with the School Committee. Unfortunately, we haven't met since 2019 due to COVID-19 and administrative changes, so I appreciate the superintendent getting us back on the schedule this year.

The committee also holds two general advisory meetings each year—spring and fall. Our most recent was April 4th, with over 60 businesses in attendance. These businesses collaborate year-round with all 14 CTE programs to ensure they remain industry-relevant and aligned with current workforce needs.

Each of the 14 programs has its own advisory committee composed of local business representatives, labor organizations, post-secondary institutions, parents, and students. In total, we have around 170 members, with 100 representing local businesses.

Next, Jim Hatcher, Director of CTE, will give a presentation, followed by a brief discussion about the program's current budget.

Jim Hachey provided an overview of the CTE program's accomplishments for the school year and highlighted community collaborations:

- **Student Achievements:**

- The Class of 2025 earned over 250 industry-recognized credentials, including OSHA, CNA, CPR/First

Aid, Adobe, and cosmetology licenses.

- Students in trades like Carpentry, Plumbing, and Electrical earned hours toward licensure.
- 29 students were inducted into the National Technical Honor Society, requiring a 93+ average in CTE and a 3.25 GPA overall.

- **Culinary Program Highlights:**

- Offers grab-and-go options weekly for staff and a monthly breakfast for veterans, in partnership with Jerome Thomas of the Veterans Affairs Office.
- Prepares meals for Project Soup, the Somerville Homeless Coalition, and caters school district events.
- A soft opening of dining services at City Hall and the TAB building for staff is scheduled for May 8 and June 10, in collaboration with school staff and leadership.

- **Graphic Communications Program:**

- Completed over 300 print jobs, saving the city and local nonprofits more than \$250,000.
- Offers students valuable entry-level experience as they transition to college or careers.

Overall, the CTE program continues to grow and positively impact both students and the broader Somerville community through hands-on learning and meaningful partnerships.

-The Cooperative Education and Affiliations

19 students currently in *affiliation programs* (e.g., Dental, Early Education).

27 students participating in *Cooperative Education*, with 4 more pending.

"Let's Get Working" program launches officially tomorrow:

- Partnership with Somerville DPW (Department of Public Works).
- Thanks to Allison (DPW) and Jill for their support in launching this.

67 students participating in *school service shops* (e.g., Automotive, Cosmetology), which are open to the public.

18 juniors have pending paperwork to begin *co-op programs* this summer and into next year.

117 out of 128 seniors are engaged in *work-based learning experiences*.

All co-op and work-based learning programs are coordinated by Meg McDevitt, who also supports daily CTE operations with Dassi—both recognized for their outstanding work.

Early Education and Care Program

- Participated in the *Safe Routes to School* initiative:
 - Conducted *pedestrian safety education* for all second grade classrooms in the district.
 - Covered topics: sidewalk safety, street crossing, driveway, and parking lot safety.
 - Collaboration included:
 - Somerville Office of Food Access and Healthy Communities
 - Mass Safe Roads
 - School outreach staff
 - Early Education & Care Program team
- Led by Suzanne, praised for her leadership and her students' proactive work.
- 17 sophomore students work in *afterschool programs* at elementary schools:
 - Gain experience with preschoolers.
 - Work two days a week (Mondays and Fridays).

Automotive Program Highlights

- The program is running strong, operating daily.
- Students service 20–25 vehicles per week.
- So far this year, they've completed work on over 200 vehicles.
- These live jobs have saved Somerville community members over \$100,000 in repair costs.

Partnership with Second Chance Cars

- New partnership with *Second Chance Cars* launched this year.
- Process:
 - Donated cars are brought to vocational schools.
 - Students repair and refurbish the vehicles.
 - The cars are then donated to individuals in need, vetted by nonprofit agencies.
- **Success story:**
 - A man named Ronald, who is in recovery, received a vehicle repaired by students.
 - The car will help him obtain his CDL license and advance his career.
 - Ronald visited the school, met with the students who worked on the car, and shared his story alongside his uncle and mentor.

- The event was attended by school administration, including Ruben.
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Ongoing Impact

- The program will continue, with at least one more vehicle expected.
- The vehicle donation events are hosted at the schools where the repairs are completed.
- As part of the program, Second Chance Cars donates \$1,000 per school toward senior awards.
- The focus remains on community service and real-world impact, rather than the monetary donation.

Cosmetology salon

The salon is open to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM.

Students serve 9–10 clients per day.

Services offered include:

- Manicures
- Waxing
- Hair color treatments
- Styling
- Facials
- And more

Community Partnerships & Outreach

- Ongoing partnership with the Council on Aging for *Spa Day Clinics*.
- In discussions with the Director of Veterans Affairs to establish a *Spa Day Clinic for local veterans*.
 - Goal: Host at least one clinic this year.
 - Jerome is actively working to make this collaboration a reality.
- These clinics reflect the program's broader goal of incorporating community service into hands-on learning.

Boston Bruins, Bosch, and SHS Partnership

- Second year of collaboration between Somerville High School (SHS), the Boston Bruins, and Bosch.
- Bosch donated over \$10,000 worth of tools to the program this year (up from \$7,500 last year).
- Bosch also donated 10 tickets to a Bruins game:
 - Attendees included 1 Bosch representative, 8 SHS students, and the CTE representative.
- At the game, students raffled off a piece of furniture they built:
 - Created from game-used hockey sticks.
 - Winning bid: \$2,000.
 - Last year, three pieces were made; time constraints limited it to one this year.
 - Students posed for a group photo with the chair at the game.
- Bruins and Bosch representatives committed to continuing the partnership next year, saying “You’re number one—we’re doing it again next year.”
- The project encourages cross-department collaboration among:
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Drafting
 - Carpentry

MAVA Vocational Directors Group Highlights

- **Collaboration with Brunt Workwear:**
 - Brunt Workwear, a successful company founded in North Reading, is teaming up with vocational schools in Massachusetts.
 - The founders named their boot models after each of their friends and are now giving back to the trades.
 - Brunt committed to donating over 100,000 pairs of boots to vocational schools across the state.
 - SHS and one other school were selected to kick off the statewide donation initiative.
 - SHS requested and will receive 500 pairs of boots (each valued at \$140–\$180) by end of May.
 - These will be distributed to students in need and surplus will be stored for next year.
 - The initiative will expand to other vocational and comprehensive schools statewide, addressing a significant student need.

Comments/ Questions

Chair Krepchin- I'm curious how often or if ever you have a student that wants a certain program and doesn't get it. Jim-We held three lotteries this year for incoming freshmen. For the Cosmetology program, 29 students applied, but we could only accept 21. Typically, the limit is 20 (based on the board's rule of 10 students per certified teacher), but we're allowed one additional student to work at the clinic desk, bringing the total to 21. That left 8 students on the waiting list. One accepted student is still undecided, so there may be room for a wait-listed student. Additionally, we often see movement over the summer, so we'll aim to maintain the 21-student capacity into the middle of next year.

Chair Krepchin but if there is more interest it's a lottery that figures out who gets the spots

Jim- yes so we do a lottery and then it'll be number 22 will be the first on the waiting list and it's all recorded and it's all by computer

Dr. Phillips- Are we saying that 20 10th grade students requested advanced manufacturing

Jim- No so this is sorry grade 10 total 10 to 12th grade is 20 students and then automotive is total 10 to 12th grade 49 students so this is 10th to 12th grade those overall numbers so he had a little bit smaller he had he had a small because remember we had to close that program so he had a small he has a very small junior class he has a I think the his sophomore class is like 10 and then his freshman class is a little bit small I think it ended at eight so we're trying to build that program

Mr Biton- are there certain programs that we see year-over-year have sort of the greatest demand from our students uh are we tracking that

Jim- if you look at our health careers program so our health careers has so this year sophomores going to be juniors next year there's 36 of them so we took in two groups so our health careers and this year I think we took in 26 so our health careers program is a big program our cosmetology program is a much needed program our carpentry program is a much wanted program last year our electrical program was a big program this year they they've leveled out right at 21 I believe so yeah so those are kind of the big programs that that kids are kids are picking

Mr. Biton-Follow up are there Is are there ways that we could increase the capacity of of those much more in demand programs

Jim-Not with the size of the classrooms we have right now.

On the next slide, you'll see projected CTE enrollment numbers for next year. While 9th grade exploratory enrollment currently looks low, it's expected to increase. We anticipate around 20 students coming from private schools and about 9 from Full Circle, which aligns with typical patterns for this time of year.

For upper grades, we're seeing strong retention and growth:

- 10th grade: +19 students
- 11th grade: +43 students
- 12th grade: +36 students

These increases reflect the success of collaborative efforts between academic and counseling teams to support students. The work done over the last three years to improve retention, especially the shift to a grade-based schedule has paid off. The major issue previously was losing students in grades 11 and 12, but now more students

are continuing in their CTE programs year to year.

A clarification was made: the "+36" in 12th grade refers to students continuing from 11th grade, showing reduced attrition and stronger program sustainability.

Tom- talked about the need for increased funding for the CTE program, citing that the current budget is insufficient given the scale and impact of the program. With 937 students enrolled 67% of the high school population, the requested budget of \$297,745 amounts to just \$318 per student or \$21,267 per program, which he described as minimal considering the scope of the work.

Tom noted that only \$188,000 has been approved so far, resulting in just \$200 per student. He highlighted the importance of materials, preventative maintenance, and constant technology upgrades especially in programs like Graphic Arts, Pre-Engineering, and Construction Technology that are essential for staying current with industry standards and regulations. For example, the electrical code updates every three years, and a single code book can cost \$350.

He acknowledged inflation and market volatility, especially in construction materials, which adds financial strain and unpredictability. Tom shared examples of how some programs are self-sustaining (e.g., Automotive and Cosmetology), and praised the work of staff and advisors in securing equipment and donations.

Additionally, Tom requested \$39,000 for equipment maintenance and \$18,657 for books and online curriculum, both necessary to maintain program quality and compliance with changing industry standards.

He also stressed the value of SkillsUSA competitions, which help raise student performance and engagement but come with added costs like travel and lodging.

Tom underscored that CTE programs are expensive but high impact, saving the city hundreds of thousands annually while preparing students for the workforce. He cited support from labor unions and shared long-standing success stories, particularly the collaboration with Local 103.

Finally, he recognized broader financial uncertainties and pressures but reaffirmed that the request—less than \$300,000 out of an estimated \$1.5 million in available funds—is a strong investment in student futures and city resources.

Dr. Carmona- I want to make sure that first we recognize Tom's contribution to the work. I know that you are not only just a business partner and a steward in the work around CTE but also someone fully committed to making sure that the work happens at all levels so that's thank you for your contribution. I also want to highlight also the fact that Jim Hatchey is a powerhouse when it comes to CTE and that's as you said it he has grown the program in collaboration with multiple players and I know the collaboration with the scale as well as well as the principal of the high school we are very fortunate to have the two of you at the front of the work that is happening.

A couple of things that i want to say about the budget, My understanding is that the way our budget is configured for the monies that we have and what we give to CTE is the same bucket of the high school so I know you were mentioning that it hasn't you know how is it split the way my understanding again is that those monies come and then is a comprehensive high school so those monies are distributed across the board to the highest school since 2016 the monies that we get from chapter 78 have changed very little with it's just we get the addition of the per pupil per pupil addition on a yearly basis but is minimal so regardless about the number of students that grow in in our CTE program uh those numbers don't come in the form of chapter 78. I have I'm saying that not to say that t the needs that you are highlighting are real that is an important thing and we are fully committed to make sure that that we support the growth that we see at the highest school through the CTE program the challenge that we have right

now is that as we all know we basically have to go through an attrition in terms of revenues that are coming and we made a decision as a in the collaborative budget process to make some assignments to the city based on the funding that we have you know the city was the only one also that was given like a full-time assignment of a teacher and as you know we tried to match some of the request around the operations budget but it's not the full amount what I have said consistently to Jim is that if we have any funds that we have available we definitely will contribute to the operations side of the budget so I will get back to you i know you talked about chapter 74 and but again I talked to multiple people around where are these monies that you're talking about and they are not within the budget and so I will have more specific answer to you in terms of what if any chapter 74 contribution is coming our way but the money that we get is the money that we get and that's the money that we use for special education for all the different services that we provide at the high school my understanding also is that we go far and beyond the coverage of the high school in terms of percentage of our budget and again that is um treated as a as a whole amount not just a CTE um high school um so I just I just wanted to say that and to say also that we're fully committed to making sure that any short-term challenges don't impact the long-term outcomes for the equipment or for the way we are envisioning the program so this is not the end of the story you said you talked to the mayor around this so you know this is a need that definitely we want to make sure that we are fully staff as well as fully budgeted at the at the highest school through the CTE program.

Chair Krepchin-can you just quickly clarify chapter 78 is vote funding what is chapter 74?

Dr. Carmona-chapter 78 is the is the money that we get is basically the \$21 million that we get for everything from the state

Chair Krepchin - to be clear for everyone else chapter 70 the State Aid and then Chapter 74 is Vocational Certification

Dr. Carmona - Correct and so I have to break that down because my understanding we are not a vocational school, we have a comprehensive high school so those numbers that you mentioned probably might exist in the vocational world. But I don't know if I haven't seen them in our revenue stream so I will have to look at that more carefully.

Dr Phillips -thank you so much for all the work you're doing for the incredible ways you've grown this program. It's just incredible that I keep pushing my kid to sign up for Exploratory next year. I had a question about the collaborations and summer programs mostly just because I'm writing a lot of proposals these days I'm wondering if we are building into these proposals some money for equipment maintenance and stuff

Jim - yes that's built into that's built into to the summer the pre-apprentice programs

Mr. Biton - expressed appreciation for the detailed list of requested resources provided in the letter. He acknowledged that, not having a background in trades, it was difficult for him to understand many of the specific items. He asked for clarification not on the list item by item but rather on the broader context: whether the requested items represent additional, enhanced resources beyond current levels, or if not funding them would result in a decline in the quality of education being offered to students. He emphasized the importance of distinguishing between those two possibilities, recognizing that the line can sometimes be unclear.

Mr. Bent emphasized the critical importance of preventative maintenance for CTE equipment. He referenced a specific incident from the previous year involving the failure of one of two air compressors, which are essential to multiple shops, including carpentry, HVAC, and automotive. He noted that the city, which oversees building operations, initially hesitated to activate the backup compressor out of concern it might also fail — highlighting the risks of under-maintaining essential systems.

He pointed out that while much of the equipment is relatively new, most warranties have expired, and heavy daily use makes regular maintenance essential — especially for advanced manufacturing machines and other high-tech

equipment. If one of these machines fails, it can significantly impact on student learning due to reduced access. He reiterated that preventative maintenance is not optional, but necessary to ensure the continued delivery of quality instruction.

Jim- elaborated on the real costs and responsibilities associated with maintaining CTE equipment and facilities. He shared that when the air compressors failed, no one claimed responsibility for the \$27,000 repair — so it ultimately fell on him. Currently, it costs \$14,500 annually just to maintain those two compressors, and that's only one example of ongoing, critical infrastructure needs.

He explained that CTE instructors can handle some maintenance, but many tasks — particularly those related to specialized machinery, culinary equipment (like ovens and vents), and code compliance — require professional contractors. These services are essential for licensing and safety and cannot be skipped.

Jim also mentioned a \$180,000 grant used to acquire 3D printers early in his tenure, noting that no funds were allocated for maintenance. Now, as those machines age, the need for upkeep is surfacing, further straining the budget.

Additionally, he highlighted the importance of the related theory curriculum for students in the electrical program, which costs \$8,700 annually. This curriculum provides students with up to 200 credited hours toward licensing requirements — hours they would otherwise have to pay for post-graduation, offering a substantial financial and career advantage.

Mr. Bent emphasized the growing demand for skilled labor in green technology, particularly in the electrical, plumbing, and HVAC fields. He noted that much of today's green tech is electrical based, which aligns well with the program's strengths, but also highlights the need for students to be trained in the latest codes, regulations, and installation practices. These standards are evolving rapidly, and keeping up with them is critical to ensuring that students are prepared for the workforce.

Jim highlighted the lack of clear budget structure and planning around program expenses. He explained that costly items—like computer replacements (\$20,000) and air compressor repairs—have unexpectedly fallen under the CTE budget without prior notice. These responsibilities were never clearly assigned, and over time, more financial burdens have simply been shifted to CTE without a defined process. In his previous district, technology and maintenance costs were handled through separate departments, not program budgets. He emphasized the need for a clear, predictable layout of budget responsibilities to allow for proactive planning rather than reactive spending.

Dr. Phillips raised concerns about the disparity in how maintenance costs are handled for CTE equipment compared to the rest of the district. She pointed out that when equipment like ovens or air filtration systems fail in other school facilities, the city covers those expenses, but when the same issues occur within CTE spaces, the costs fall on the CTE budget. She suggested bringing this issue to the next joint subcommittee meeting with City Council and Facilities, with the goal of exploring whether the city could absorb some or all of the \$40,000 in maintenance costs before the school committee is asked to vote on the budget.

Chair Krepchin- Yes

Dr. Carmona - yeah so I also want to kind of highlight a couple of things um I think that the issue of the compressor just to go back again to the I know we bump into that understanding because when that came up that was last year with Fran we realized that DPW said it's not ours and capital said it's not ours so then we realized okay so we had to prepay some of those things so I think that is a good question i don't and I think through the collaborative process I don't know if you scope the cost of all these things. It makes sense there's another reality also that we're coming to

the end of many of the warranties that we have at the highest school with many of the systems that are in place, and I know that some of them have not been anticipated and there's always this back and forth who's paying for this who's paying for that. As I'm thinking about it it makes me think about there is a need to be more comprehensive about not only the CTE pieces because what happens again the way our budget is distributed is attributed to the high school so that also creates a challenge in terms of how do we address specific needs if the pot of money that we have has to encompass all the needs of the high school so I wanted to just to echo what you just said and also include in that assessment what is all what are some of the warranties that will be expiring that might not be covered by either DPW or by the capital improvement

Dr. Phillips - thanks for that I appreciate the nuance in a similar vein can you help me understand why CTE computers aren't rolled into the technology budget right aren't we paying \$80,000 for new computers in this new budget could we put at least half of that in for these

Dr. Carmona- we are I How much are we preparing of that how much did I come into the to the computer I know that so there's it's 20,000 I did get a call from Pat the other day that said get her a quote we may have some funds this year so that may be covered so

Dr. Carmona-correct so we as I said we are any efficiency dollars that we have that because the some things have to be prepaid that can fit that category we are trying to do as much prepaid but and that's part of also a gap that we had in general the technology budget also we asked John to think about replacement so I think is there are things that are evolving in how we budget and how we look at things that need to be replaced so it's that It's an evolution of our budget process. Again, that this is part of a larger conversation it's not just the computer is you know is compressors it's other things that need to be accounted for and I don't think we have had space to have that conversation or that how we did it before is hasn't wasn't systematic

Ms. Pitone thanked Jim Hachey for his presentation and the accompanying letter outlining CTE budget concerns, as well as Dr. Phillips for raising important questions. She emphasized that there appears to be a gap in the district's financial model for CTE, particularly as the program grows more complex with advanced technologies like 3D printers and CNC machines, which require significant investment and ongoing maintenance.

She noted that the district may not have fully understood the long-term maintenance costs involved and stressed the need for a comprehensive financial plan that clearly defines which responsibilities fall to the city and which to the schools. While acknowledging current budget constraints, she highlighted the importance of machine maintenance as a key sustainability issue that affects both student learning and teacher workload.

Although she recognizes that resources are limited, she expressed support for exploring what could be funded this year and suggested that adding funds to the CTE budget though difficult should be seriously considered in the long term to build a more sustainable financial model.

Dr. Carmona acknowledged that there is a significant funding challenge, not only for CTE but across multiple mandated programs such as special education and English language acquisition. He explained that while districts are required to provide specific services and staffing levels, no additional funding is provided by the state to meet those mandates—highlighting the need to add four teachers without additional financial support.

He emphasized that this is a broader systemic issue, particularly affecting urban districts, and warned that neglecting complex needs now could lead to more serious problems later. He welcomed continued discussion on the topic and reiterated that the district is facing financial strain, especially in a time of overall resource scarcity.

Ms. Pitone expressed appreciation for the creative budget planning and emphasized how fortunate Somerville is to avoid staff reductions, unlike many other districts. She highlighted the city's strong support for education and, while

acknowledging financial challenges, reaffirmed her desire to fund CTE needs and thanked the team for exploring prepayment options.

Mr. Biton praised Ms. Pitone for her thoughtful comments and expressed agreement with her framing of the CTE funding issue. He identified two categories of needs:

1. Critical and immediate needs (like equipment maintenance), and
2. Wants or needs that could be deferred to a future date.

He emphasized the importance of not delaying maintenance for essential equipment, specifically citing the air compressor maintenance cost of \$14,500, and the broader total of \$39,000 in critical maintenance needs. He warned that neglecting such maintenance could lead to larger, long-term problems and more costly repairs.

While acknowledging that other items like books, subscriptions, and supplies are valuable, he suggested they could be postponed, if necessary. He urged the superintendent and leadership team to prioritize funding the critical maintenance items, even if it requires creative trade-offs or cutting lower-priority expenses (e.g., computer upgrades).

In summary, he advocated for immediate action to protect the district's investment in CTE equipment by addressing key maintenance needs now.

Dr. Carmona explained that the budget process involved multiple thorough iterations, including rejecting many requests from various buildings to balance the budget. He emphasized the commitment to addressing needs at the high school by evaluating where funds can be streamlined and how changes might impact different areas. While not promising another round of budget revisions, he acknowledged the importance of exploring efficiencies. He confirmed that any efficiency savings identified would be prioritized to address key challenges raised by Jim Hatchey.

Mr. Biton thanked the team for their thorough and collaborative budget development process, acknowledging the strong and compelling case presented. He recognized that many departments have similar critical needs and expressed respect and appreciation for the streamlined budget work. He noted anticipated community interest, including a rally planned before the upcoming budget presentation, and suggested that this situation illustrates how a small amount of additional funding could have a significant impact. He closed by expressing gratitude and trust in the team's broader understanding of the budget context.

Ms. Barish reflected on Dr. Phillips' suggestion to bring the funding and responsibility discussion to the Joint Building City-School Committee Subcommittee. She questioned whether, historically, certain CTE-related expenses had ever been covered by the city, particularly before the high school building project began. Noting that few current participants were involved with CTE at that earlier time—perhaps only Mr. Bent—she expressed curiosity about whether these types of costs were traditionally the city's responsibility or always part of the CTE budget.

Mr. Bent reflected on the resource challenges faced while operating in the old CTE wing before the new building was constructed, noting that they were in "band-aid mode" due to limited investment. He credited former Governor Baker and advocacy efforts for securing grants that helped launch programs like Advanced Manufacturing. He also recalled creative, cost-saving solutions—such as using students to complete electrical work for a donated dental program from Tufts University—as examples of "smoke and mirrors" efforts to get by.

He raised concerns about the high operational and maintenance costs of the new, energy-efficient building and emphasized the need for clarity on responsibilities between the city and school district regarding maintenance and budgeting. He also highlighted the importance of establishing clear budgets for each shop, based on real needs, to

better support planning.

Bent stressed the need for fair and equitable resource distribution across the growing student population (937 students), many of whom are entering the workforce directly. He celebrated the program's success stories, such as a student earning a full scholarship to Northeastern, and closed by expressing appreciation for the school committee's continued support despite the district's financial constraints

Dr. Ackman, speaking through the chair, thanked the presenters and acknowledged the late hour. She offered a perspective not yet raised by her colleagues, emphasizing the inequity in CTE program admissions at the state level. She expressed strong disappointment in the House for blocking DESE from pursuing more equitable admission policies for CTE programs.

She praised the CTE team for their commitment to supporting all students, especially those who may not meet traditional academic metrics but are still being retained and guided through the programs. Dr. Ackman highlighted the diversity of students participating in programs like SkillsUSA and stressed that this work is a point of pride for the district—one that should be recognized, celebrated, and continually invested in.

Chair Krepchin: Well said. I think that's a good note to end on. Thank you again for being here. Thank you all for your continued support.

V. REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee Meeting for the Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting for April 28, 2025 (Ms. Barish) **TABLED**

B. School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole: April 30, 2025 (Dr. Phillips)

MOTION: There was a motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Dr. Phillips, to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for Finance and Facilities Meeting of the Whole for April 30, 2025

Report of the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee, April 30, 2025, submitted by Sarah Phillips

The Finance and Facilities Subcommittee met on April 30, 2025. Members present were Emily Ackman, Ilana Krepchin, Sarah Phillips, Andre Green, Ellenor Barish, Laura Pitone, and Leiran Biton. Also in attendance was Interim Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Pat Durette, Superintendent Rubén Carmona, and Assistant Superintendent Jessica Boston-Davis, and Incoming Interim CFO, Bobby Beretta.

Mayor Ballantyne joined at 6:15pm.

Sarah Phillips called the meeting to order at 6:12 pm. There were 2 attendees in the audience and one item on the agenda:

1. FY26 Budget

Pat added back in 75,000 to replace computers and monitors. She has also transferred approximately \$300,000 in McKinney Vento funds to a grant fund to be reimbursed by the city when those funds hit their budget. Other changes are in special education. They include approximately \$500,000 in special education transportation (an increase of approximately \$200,000 over what we are paying now), which is offset largely by some of a large increase in the Circuit Breaker funds we will receive in FY26. Those changes bring the budget to 5.25%.

Rubén added that we have been able to reduce some costs, following conversations with the city. The 5.25% budget is the same as the 6% budget we originally proposed. Otherwise, we would not be able to add the positions we need.

There was a discussion about using Circuit Breaker funds. We plan to carry over the full amount of Circuit Breaker funds received in FY25 to FY26. In FY24, we received \$2.5M of Circuit Breaker money, which was carried over to FY25 and we are spending that now. In FY25 we are projected to receive a total of \$3.37M in Circuit Breaker funds. The increase for FY26 compared to last year is approximate \$848K. We are reflecting some of that increase to offset special education costs in the budget for FY26. The full amount will be spent in the FY26 budget.

2. Transfer of FY25 salary funds to operations

We are projecting a balance in our salary accounts. In order to use them to pre-pay operational costs, the city is requiring us to formally approve the transfer of funds from the salary account to the special education account. This happens when you budget for certain positions but don't fill them or end up paying a lower salary than we've budgeted.

Emly Ackman moved that we formally approve the transfer of \$200,000 from the salary account to the special education account. The motion was seconded by Ellenor Barish. It passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 6:48 pm.

Documents Used:

Pending Approved Positions for FY26 Budget.pdf
Items that Require the vote of the full School Committee.pdf
FY26 Budget Projection.pdf

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Report out of SC Coordinated Office Hours- Table

B. Field Trip: (Recommended action: Approval)

MOTION: There was a motion by _Dr. _Ackman_, seconded by Ms. Pitone_, to approve for **May 30, 2025**, 11 Students from SHS Auto Tech will visit the New England Dragway in Epping, NH. Travel via school bus, students cost \$0 and **June 10, 2025**, 46 Students from Kennedy School will visit Canobie Lake Park in Salem, NH Travel via school bus, student cost \$0

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

C. Acceptance of FY25 Grant Funds (Recommended action: approval)

MOTION: There was a motion by Ms Pitone, seconded by Dr. Ackman, The Superintendent respectfully requests that the School Committee accepts and approves expending a grant in the amount of \$338,985 from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the provisions of MGL Chapter 44, Section 53A, to reimburse the School Department for costs incurred in the transportation of homeless students.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. MSBA Update

Dr. Carmona no new updates we are still in the LPM part of the process

Ms. Pitone- I had a question I guess to the chair if we are going to have some type of conversation with the body

about the recommendation or the concerns I request that some of the information that the CAG is being received can also be given to the school committee so that we can come to the conversation more informed than just our opinion

Chair Krepchin yes this was actually one of my concerns about how to do this process because if we're walking in uninformed, I doesn't really feel terribly useful, so I need to talk more with Mr. Green about how best to do that and to actually come with some information so that we're grounded in something, so I agree and yes

VIII. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS

No items

IX. CONDOLENCES

The Somerville School Committee extends its deepest condolences to the families of

Billy Goodspeed, Brother of Jennifer Goodspeed Special Education AIM Paraprofessional at the Capuano **School**

Timothy P Pacheco, Brother of Andrea Pease Occupational Therapist at Capuano School

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Related documents:

Agenda

[Basic Needs and Housing Support Services](#)

[SFLC- Liaisons](#)

[SFLC Volunteers](#)

[CTE Presentation](#)

Submitted by: E Garcia

Attach Documents Starting on the next page

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
SCHOOL COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CITY HALL
REGULAR MEETING – MAY 5, 2025 – 7:00 P.M.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2025, this meeting of the School Committee will be conducted via hybrid participation.

We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the City of Somerville website and local cable access government channels.

To **watch** this Regular School Committee meeting live from home please visit the following link:
somervillema.gov/GovTVLive

To **listen** live to the simultaneous interpretation of this meeting in **Spanish, Portuguese or Haitian Creole**, or to participate in Public Comment, please join this Zoom Webinar and choose your desired language by clicking the interpretation globe on the Zoom:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pR0SMl0vsJ0WNEg

Meeting ID: 869 0362 0322

Password: SPSSC24

Somerville Public Schools - School Committee Goals 2023 - 2025

In order to address the root causes of systemic inequity in our schools, the Somerville School Committee and SPS commit to the following goals, knowing that these can only be achieved through ensuring meaningful partnerships with Somerville families, district staff, city government, and community partners. Our goals attempt to address deep-rooted systemic barriers that have prevented us from achieving our district vision of equity and excellence and ensure that all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, have the supports and resources they need to achieve educational success in our district now and in the future.

1. Whole Child Teaching and Learning... we will:

- prepare students to demonstrate strong literacy and mathematics foundation by grade 3, grade 6, and grade 10
- provide all students with integrated classroom lessons from a high quality social-emotional learning curriculum that helps students value and develop their ability to build relationships with other students, to be self aware and socially aware, to self regulate, and to make responsible decisions
- expand access to real-world learning experiences through students' participation in Early College, Advanced Placement courses, CTE, and/or other learning experiences that help students build critical 21st century skills, meeting with their college and career counselor in their junior and senior year, and students graduating with a defined post-secondary plan.

2. Equitable Access to Programming... we will conduct a district enrollment study to understand the prospective future population of the district and create and begin implementing a strategy for school building development, school assignment, and programming that aligns with the district's equity policy, and which is based on results of the enrollment study and the projected 10+ year plan for school facilities.

3. Workforce Diversity... we will increase the percentage of support staff of color, teachers and counselors of color, and administrators of color by 6% per group compared to SY22 rates through evaluating and strengthening all elements of our personnel system – recruitment, processes, training, retention, development, advancement, and staff data collection systems on which we base and measure our improvement efforts.

4. Equitable Resource Allocation... we will design, evaluate, and partially or fully implement student-based budgeting by 2025, or identify alternative mechanisms to more equitably allocate district resources.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER

Call to order with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES

III. PUBLIC COMMENT – In person or via Zoom

To participate in Public Comment remotely please use the following Zoom link:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pR0SMl0vsJ0WNEg

Meeting ID: 869 0362 0322

Password: SPSSC24

IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

A. District Report

- Basic Needs and Housing Support Services
- SFLC- Liaisons & Volunteers
- CTE Presentation

V. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES

A. School Committee Meeting for the Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting: April 28, 2025 (Ms. Barish)

MOTION: To accept the report of the Rules Management Subcommittee Meeting for April 28, 2025

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MOTION: To accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for the Finance and Facilities Meeting of April 30, 2025.

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B. Field Trip: (Recommended action: Approval)

May 30, 2025

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MOTION: The Superintendent respectfully requests that the School Committee accepts and approves expending a grant in the amount of \$338,985 from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the provisions of MGL Chapter 44, Section 53A, to reimburse the School Department for costs incurred in the transportation of homeless students.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. MSBA Update

VIII. ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

IX. CONDOLENCE

X. ADJOURNMENT

For Simultaneous Interpretation in Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole See below:

Español - Para Interpretación

Para **ver** la Reunión Regular del Comité Escolar el 5 de mayo a las 7:00, en vivo desde casa, visite el siguiente enlace

y elija **GovTV**: <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

Para **escuchar en vivo la interpretación simultánea de la Reunión Regular en español, portugués o criollo haitiano**, únase a este Zoom y elija el idioma que desee haciendo clic al globo de interpretación:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pR0SMI0vsJ0WNEg

Identificación de la reunión: 869 0362 0322

Contraseña: SPSSC24

Português - Para Interpretação

Para **assistir** à Reunião Regular do Comitê Escolar 5 de mai às 7:00, ao vivo de casa, visite o seguinte link e selecione **GovTV**: [https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-](https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv)

[engagement/somerville-city-tv](https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv)

Para **ouvir ao vivo a tradução simultânea da Assembleia Ordinária em espanhol, português ou crioulo haitiano**, entre neste Zoom e escolha o idioma desejado clicando no balão de interpretação:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pR0SMI0vsJ0WNEg

ID da reunião: 869 0362 0322

Senha: SPSC24

Kreyòl ayisyen - Pou entèpretasyon

Pou **gade** reyinyon regilye Komite Lekòl la 5 Me a 7:00, an dirèk nan kay la, vizite lyen sa a epi chwazi **GovTV**:

<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

Pou **w tande entèpretasyon similtane Reyinyon Regilye a an panyòl, pòtigè oswa kreyòl ayisyen an**, rantre nan Zoom sa a epi chwazi lang ou vle a lè w klike sou balon entèpretasyon an:

https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EB-AFq7pR0SMI0vsJ0WNEg

Reyinyon ID: 869 0362 0322

Modpas: SPSSC24