

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, December 15, 2025 - Regular Meeting**

7:00 p.m. – City Hall Chambers

**Members present:** Ms. Pitone (*arrived 7:05*), Dr. Ackman, Mr. Green, Mr. Biton, President Davis, Mayor Ballantyne, Ms. Barish, Dr. Phillips, and Ms. Krepchin. **Members Absent:**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 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 – 9 –Ms. Pitone, Dr. Ackman, Mr. Green, Mr. Biton, President Davis, Mayor Ballantyne, Ms. Barish, Dr. Phillips, and Ms. Krepchin **ABSENT** –

**II. SCHOOL COMMITTEE STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVES**

Student Representatives Bhavika Kalia and Peyton Gates were both present and reported the following:

- Last full week before break; school community preparing for upcoming vacation
- School committee members identified key priorities for discussion with the School Committee

**Key Discussion Topics**

- **Clubs**
  - Concerns about club funding, prioritization, and recognition
  - Interest in creating a more structured system to acknowledge club contributions
  - Idea proposed for a club recognition or awards event
- **XBlock**
  - Ongoing concerns about student attendance, scheduling, and teacher support
  - Goal to ensure XBlock benefits both students and teachers without negatively impacting learning
- **Curriculum & Electives**
  - Interest in expanding inclusive and culturally diverse elective offerings
- **Arts & Activities**
  - Need for increased visibility and communication around arts events (e.g., art shows, concerts)
  - Emphasis on recognizing student work and supporting arts programs
- **Ballot Question 3**
  - Discussion planned on follow-up and alignment with school values
  - Concerns raised regarding school contracts (e.g., Chromebook sourcing)

Questions/Comments

**Dr. Ackman:** thanked the student representatives for their comments and asked for clarification on two points. First,

she noted that “additional supports for teachers” is a broad topic and invited the students to share more specific ideas at the upcoming meeting. Second, she asked whether the limited visibility of art shows and showcases is due to inequitable promotion by student groups, or whether the school institutionally gives greater attention to sports performances than to arts events.

**Peyton:** responded that morning announcements frequently highlight sports games but did not mention the recent art show. They also observed that pep rallies and school events largely focus on athletics, while creative and arts-related opportunities are less visible and less consistently publicized.

**Bhavika:** added that student leadership groups, such as the Communications Club and class officers, determine the content of morning announcements and pep rallies. When students involved in arts programs are not represented in these leadership roles, it becomes more difficult to raise awareness of arts electives and activities. As a result, school events tend to center on sports achievements rather than a wider range of extracurriculars. Berikha also noted that many teachers are feeling overwhelmed by their workload and increasing student support demands. They suggested that XBlock could be better structured to support teachers by prioritizing student-teacher meetings during the school day, which could reduce the need for after-school meetings while still ensuring students receive necessary academic support.

**Mr. Biton:** thanked the student representatives for sharing the agenda for the upcoming meeting in advance, noting that this practice is helpful in allowing members to think ahead and focus more clearly on the topics to be discussed

**Chair Krepchin:** I also just wanted to mention for my colleagues that are on Instagram that I saw that the Class of 2026 has started posting their whenever a student has decided where they're going to go to college, they post a cute thing about the college and a baby picture, and they're really fun to see, so if anyone's on Instagram, it's like Class of 2026. I'll have to look up exactly what the what it's called, but it's fun to follow. I've done it in past years. So I just wanted to let everyone know. Next agenda item was Awards and Citations, but proposed taking it out of order to allow for public comment before the Superintendent's remarks. She noted that this sequence would be more appropriate, and proceeded in the absence of objections.

### **III. PUBLIC COMMENT- Out of Order**

Chair Krepchin read the public comment regulations and asked those who had signed up to comment at this time.

**Jessica Adams, a resident of 3 Porter Street in Somerville and parent of three children at the Kennedy School,** and I want to express my appreciation for the work of the School Committee and Dr. Carmona's vision of equity within the district. I've seen the positive impact of equitable opportunities across grade levels, like shared field trips, and I'm glad to see discussions of equity continuing on the School Committee's agenda. I believe it's important to address race, ethnicity, and other social barriers, as well as ensure equitable access to programming and resources. I also want to highlight the need to focus on students with disabilities, both visible and invisible, and to proactively identify and support them through initiatives like child find, before they require full IEP evaluations. Finally, I would like to ask the School Committee, Superintendent, and Mr. Arellano to find ways to engage with the development of the inclusive playground at the Kennedy School. Partnering with occupational therapists and providing input to the city and designers would ensure that multiple perspectives are considered, especially from those closest to issues of systemic inequities related to both ethnicity and ability.

### **IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A. November 3, 2025

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Mrs. Barish, seconded by Dr. Ackman, to approve the minutes from October 20, 2025.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

### **V. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

## A. District Report

Notes- Superintendent Update: School Committee Meeting- Monday December 15, 2025

### APPRECIATION

To begin tonight, I'd like to take a brief moment to echo the appreciation already shared for our departing colleagues.

Mayor Ballantyne and our School Committee members have been incredible partners to our schools. They've shown real dedication to our students and this community, and we are so grateful for the time, care, and energy they've invested.

This support and collaboration has helped shape our district in meaningful ways, and their impact will continue to support and inspire our students.

As you conclude your service, we simply want to say: thank you. Thank you for believing in our students, for working tirelessly with our staff and administrators, and for making a difference in our community.

Thank you.

### HOLIDAY SEASON AND REFLECTIONS

As we come to the end of the calendar year, this season brings many traditions and celebrations - Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, and others - that reflect the diverse cultures and backgrounds of our students and families in Somerville.

This time of year is often one of reflection and togetherness. At the same time, the events of this weekend have been difficult, and the violence and anger we see in the world can feel overwhelming.

Still, the holidays remind us of our shared humanity and our ability to care for one another. Across our community, these traditions center on light, generosity, and hope. They offer a chance to pause, support one another, and find moments of comfort, even when the world feels unsettled.

As the season continues, we encourage our community to stay strong, to treat one another with kindness, and to remember that we are here to support each other and keep our schools safe and welcoming.

*And speaking of staff,* I also want to extend my deep appreciation to our teachers, staff, and school leaders. Their dedication and care throughout the year allow our students to feel safe, challenged, and supported.

Please remember that our holiday break will begin with early dismissal on Tuesday, December 23.

- Schools will be closed from December 24 to January 2.
- Schools reopen on Monday, January 5.

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### STRATEGIC PLAN (AMARA)

The start of a new year is also a special time for reflection, and this is true within the school district, as we look ahead to a new year full of possibility.

In recent weeks, our departments have assessed the ways their efforts align with and advance our strategic plan.

We remain committed to improving our programs while also making meaningful progress on the priorities that matter most to our students and families:

- Academic Excellence
- Equity and Access

- Wellness and Joy
- And, Community and Family Engagement

Joining us tonight, our Chief of Staff, Amara Anosike, will provide an overview of what we've achieved so far under our strategic plan and discuss how we intend to carry it forward in the coming months and years.

• **Strategic Plan Report**

Amara Anosike Chief of Staff, and Sam Eligine, Director of Data Assessment and Accountability share the Strategic Plan Report - *Presentation below*

**Comments/Questions**

**Dr. Phillips:** I've been working in and around schools for a long time, and I've learned that there are many ways to achieve improvement. The approach this district is taking really going deep into the fundamentals and working on them until they are fully effective, is the hardest I've seen, but likely the most impactful. I'm really proud of everyone here for taking on that work and doing it so well. Thank you.

**Mr. Green:** I completely agree with Dr. Phillips. I really appreciate that we are taking this deep-work approach rather than focusing on quick fixes or "shiny object" solutions. I also appreciate that we have short-term indicators to track progress, even when broader outcomes, like economic improvements, may take longer to show. My question is, what are we doing for staff, families, and students to help them see how their work fits into the overall plan? I think it's important to create a feedback loop so that those doing the work can contribute input and understand how their efforts align with the district's goals moving forward.

**Ms. Anosike:** I want to clarify that we're sharing this work and gathering feedback from families and staff through multiple channels. We hold family listening sessions focused on specific priorities, such as special education or out-of-school time programs, based on data and community needs. We're also improving accessibility through our website, working with Communications, and using working groups and surveys to collect input. Overall, our approach is multifaceted and ongoing.

**Mr. Green:** I have a quick follow-up. For the family listening sessions, will they be advertised? How will people know about them? Are they part of a larger plan?

**Ms. Anosike:** Yes. The invitations state that the sessions are in furtherance of the strategic plan and informed by the data we receive from families. We have also stayed in contact with families who participated in the root cause analysis sessions, providing updates on our progress with the plan, and we will continue to do so.

**Bhavika:** I just want to say thank you as well. I appreciate seeing the emphasis on how everyone plays a role in our school community. I especially love seeing the restorative justice circles highlighted. I was trained as a student leader to run these circles, and it's wonderful to see how they contribute to a balanced and inclusive school community. Thank you for presenting, and I really enjoyed being here and listening.

**Mr. Green:** Do student representatives have access to the folder? If not, can we make sure they do, or provide the presentation to them in some way so they can review it? It seems like it would be straightforward to allow students to access the Google folder just like the rest of us.

**Chair Krepchin:** I want to build on Mr. Green's question about communication. While it was mentioned here and in Daryl's presentation, I think the SPS in print and the SPS podcast could be excellent, user-friendly ways to share all of these great initiatives. I just wanted to highlight that, as I'm excited to see these channels being used. If there are no further questions, thank you again for the presentation.

**Dr. Carmona:** Thank you, Sam and Amara, for their work and emphasized that none of this is possible without the

commitment of educators. Highlighted the significant effort involved in implementing high-quality instructional materials across subjects and social-emotional programs. Noted that while progress has been made, gaps remain and district-level change is a heavy lift, but expressed confidence in Somerville's capacity to continue this work.

## **VI. AWARDS AND CITATIONS**

### **A. Recognition of Service for Outgoing School Committee Members**

Outgoing School Committee Members were presented with a citation followed by remarks from members

### ***Ilana Krepchin –School Committee, Ward 2***

**WHEREAS**, Ilana Krepchin has been a dedicated member of the Somerville School Committee, serving in leadership for the majority of her 5.5 years, including two and a half years as Chair and two and a half years as Vice Chair; and

**WHEREAS**, throughout her tenure, Ilana has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the students and families of Somerville Public Schools, ensuring that every decision reflects the values of equity, inclusion, and excellence; and

**WHEREAS**, Ilana served on the negotiating committee that provided first-in-the-state parental leave benefits, setting a new standard for educator support; and

**WHEREAS**, under her tenure, the district saw substantial increases in funding each year, strengthening resources and opportunities for all students; and

**WHEREAS**, Ilana's child has been enrolled in Somerville Public Schools throughout her service and will graduate in 2026, giving her a deeply personal perspective on the importance of strong public education; and

**WHEREAS**, Ilana has generously given her time as a volunteer reading buddy at the Argenziano School, fostering literacy and a love of learning among young students; and

**WHEREAS**, Ilana has extended her care beyond the classroom by delivering meals to elderly neighbors who face mobility challenges, exemplifying her commitment to community and compassion; and

**WHEREAS**, as an accomplished artist, Ilana has consistently supported charitable causes by donating her handcrafted jewelry, blending creativity with generosity to benefit those in need; and

**WHEREAS**, Ilana's leadership has been marked by thoughtful deliberation, collaborative spirit, and a steadfast focus on what is best for students, families, and educators; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Somerville School Committee publicly acknowledges the extraordinary contributions of Ilana Krepchin and expresses its deepest gratitude for her years of service, and wishes her continued success in all future endeavors; and

**RESOLVED**, that this well-earned Resolution be included in the minutes of tonight's meeting, and that a framed copy be presented to Ilana Krepchin.

## **Dr. Sarah Phillips –School Committee, Ward 3**

**WHEREAS,** Dr. Sarah Phillips has faithfully served as a member of the Somerville School Committee since 2020 representing Ward 3 for three two-year terms; and

**WHEREAS,** Dr. Phillips has served as Vice Chair of the School Committee, Chair of the Finance and Facilities Subcommittee, and Chair of the Educational Programs Subcommittee, and has served on the Rules Subcommittee, the Special Policing Subcommittee and the School Buildings Facilities and Maintenance Committee; and

**WHEREAS,** as Chair of Finance and Facilities, Dr. Phillips collaborated closely with city leadership during the most difficult budget season in more than a decade, working creatively to address a budget shortfall and to avoid potential losses in staff and student services; and

**WHEREAS,** while leading the Superintendent evaluation process, Dr. Phillips held both the Superintendent and the School Committee accountable for clear goals and outcomes; and

**WHEREAS,** to strengthen accountability and transparency in school building maintenance, Dr. Phillips successfully advocated for the establishment of the first Joint Committee of the City Council and School Committee dedicated to School Building Facilities and Maintenance; and

**WHEREAS,** during the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Phillips played a leadership role in bringing students safely back to in-person learning; and

**WHEREAS,** Dr. Phillips has been a fierce advocate for students and educators in addressing concerns related to policing in schools and the impact of school safety policies on students; and

**WHEREAS,** Dr. Phillips consistently led with an equity lens, providing a clear voice on issues of inequity and fostering a culture of continuous improvement for both educators and students; and

**WHEREAS,** Dr. Phillips contributed significantly to the efforts of the School Committee through her collaborative and analytical approach, and through her experience as an education researcher, parent, and community member, with a focus on evidence-based practice; and

**WHEREAS,** during her tenure on the School Committee, Dr. Phillips generously shared her extensive professional knowledge of public education policy and programming—including expertise in out-of-school time—offering best-practice perspectives from across the Commonwealth and beyond, and encouraging learning from other districts; now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** that the Somerville School Committee hereby publicly acknowledges and expresses its deepest appreciation to Dr. Sarah Phillips for her dedicated service and leadership, and wishes her continued success in all future endeavors; and be it further

**RESOLVED,** that this Resolution be entered into the permanent records of the Somerville School Committee, and that a framed copy be presented to Dr. Phillips in recognition of her exemplary service.

## ***Ellenor Barish- School Committee, Ward 6***

**Whereas,** Ellenor Barish has represented Somerville's Ward Six on the School Committee since 2020; and

**Whereas,** During that time, she served in a number of key roles, including negotiating several union contracts, chairing the completion of the work of the Special Policing Subcommittee, representing the School Committee on the district's Wellness Working Group, and serving 5 consecutive years as Chairs of the Rules Subcommittee; and

**Whereas,** Her negotiations lead to contracts that set state and national benchmarks on issues like para educator pay, family leave, and most recently special education inclusion efforts; and

**Whereas,** Her efforts on Policing and Wellness have lead to policies that serves as a model for other districts in terms of equity and justice; and

**Whereas,** Her tenure on Rules included both the adoption of the policies needed for a smooth COVID reopening, and the district's most thorough review of the policy manual in over 15 years; and

**Whereas,** In everything she has done Ms. Barish's work has been marked by attention to detail, an open-mind and willingness to learn, a selfless commitment to service, and an unshakeable commitment to keeping the most vulnerable residents needs foremost; and

**Whereas,** In doing so, Ms. Barish has done immeasurable good for the students, families and staff of Somerville Public Schools; advancing our values of Equity, Academic Excellence, and the education of the whole child; therefore be it

**Resolved:** That the Somerville School Committee does hereby publicly and proudly express its deepest gratitude to Ellenor Barish for her unwavering commitment to Somerville Public Schools, its students, staff, and families; and be it further

**Resolved:** That this Resolution be entered into the minutes of tonight's meeting, and that a framed copy be presented to Ellenor Barish.

# ***The Honorable Mayor Katjana Ballantyne***

**Whereas,** Mayor Katjana Ballantyne was sworn in as Mayor on January 3, 2022, and has faithfully and honorably served as Mayor for four years (2022-2025); and

**Whereas,** Drawing on more than 30 years of leadership spanning government, nonprofits, and international business—as well as her experience as a parent and community advocate—Mayor Ballantyne championed inclusive leadership and worked to build opportunity and equity for all residents; and

**Whereas,** Mayor Ballantyne made historic investments in Somerville Public Schools, increasing the SPS budget by 34 percent since taking office, including a record-setting ten percent increase for the 2022-2023 school year, which has resulted in strengthened core academics, expanded social service and mental-health supports, and investments in the school workforce; and

**Whereas,** Through her leadership, Mayor Ballantyne has strengthened the relationship between City government, families, schools, and community stakeholders, consistent with the values of public service and community collaboration; and

**Whereas,** Prior to becoming Mayor, Mayor Ballantyne served eight years (2014-2021) on City Council representing Ward 7, including two years as Council President (2018-2019), during which time she was an engaged participant in School Committee meetings; and

**Whereas,** Mayor Ballantyne has lived in Somerville since 1993, where she started her family and raised two daughters who attended the Somerville Public Schools; and

**Whereas,** Mayor Ballantyne's years of public service, vision, dedication, and tireless advocacy have left a lasting positive impact on the City of Somerville, its schools, and its people; now, therefore, be it

**Resolved:** That the Somerville School Committee does hereby publicly and proudly express its deepest gratitude to the Honorable Mayor Katjana Ballantyne for her unwavering commitment to Somerville Public Schools, its students, staff, and families; and be it further

**Resolved:** That this Resolution be entered into the minutes of tonight's meeting, and that a framed copy be presented to the Honorable Mayor Katjana Ballantyne.

***The committee took a recess to celebrate members***

## **VII. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT (Continue)**

### **A. PERSONNEL REPORT**

- December 2025

We have two more retirements from long time employees – our best wishes go to them for all the work they put in

Jerri Fullerton	PreK Paraprofessional at Capuano	27 years
Elizabeth Doncaster	Director of Student Services	23 years

Unfortunately, we lost a great special education teacher in Brenda LeBlanc Jaster who will be resigning December 10, 2025 to pursue a new opportunity

Our list of leaves keeps growing due to parental leaves

Yesenia Reales has moved into a special education Aim para at the Capuano, she will be leaving Community Schools to take on this new promotional opportunity

We are very excited to welcome Lovette Jacobs as the new Electrical Instructor for CTE

We have been fortunate to fill the parental leaves of absence vacancies with qualified teachers at the WSNS/Grade 5 (Shalom Krinsky); Kennedy/SEEK Teacher (Jeff Durney); Healey/Speech and Language Pathologist (Mei-Hua Li); and Healey/Grade 5 (Lil Walsh)

We continue to hire Substitute teacher, and have hired the athletic coaches in Basketball, Swimming, Tennis and Ice Hockey.

## **VIII. REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

### **A. School Committee Meeting for the Joint School Building Facilities and Maintenance Subcommittee Meeting: December 8, 2025 (Mr. Biton)**

Report to School Committee on the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Committee Meeting for December 8, 2025

To: Somerville School Committee

From: Leiran Biton, Chair of Subcommittee on School Building Facilities and Maintenance

The School Committee (SC) School Building Facilities and Maintenance Subcommittee met jointly with the City Council's (CC) School Building Facilities and Maintenance Special Committee on December 8, 2025, via Zoom.

Attending:

- School Committee members: Leiran Biton; Laura Pitone; Dr. Sarah Phillips
- City Councilors: Jesse Clingan; Naima Sait; Lance Davis
- Somerville Public Schools (SPS): Danielle Barry, Facilities, Safety and Transportation Coordinator
- City of Somerville: Yasmine Raddassi, Legislative Liaison; Rich Raiche, Infrastructure and Asset Management Director; Bill Fisher, Director of Emergency Management; Ralph Henry, Director of Capital Projects and Planning; Jill Lathan, Department of Public Works (DPW) Commissioner; and Delaney Fisher-Cassiol, Clerk of Committees.

Mr. Biton called the SC subcommittee meeting to order at 6:03 p.m., establishing quorum with two members (Dr. Phillips and Mr. Biton) present. Ms. Pitone joined at 6:06 p.m. There were eight (8) items on the SC agenda; items were discussed in the order listed.

#### **1) MSBA updates**

City staff provided updates on the ongoing MSBA process. Ms. Raddassi reported that the Mayor and Mayor-Elect are in communication to ensure a smooth transition and are awaiting recommendations from the School Construction Advisory Group (CAG). Mr. Raiche added that the School Building Committee now meets monthly and is focused on developing the educational plan with the City's architectural firm, Perkins Eastman. He anticipates this plan will be presented to the School Committee for approval in February or March. Mr. Clingan noted that all public meetings are recorded and available on the city website and encouraged public engagement.

## 2) Swing Space plan

Mr. Fisher presented an update on the continuity of operations plan for Somerville Public Schools. He reported that the planning team is meeting weekly to assess risks, identify critical resources, and evaluate alternative facilities. The initial framework involves using the TAB building as a temporary location immediately following a school disruption. Mr. Fisher outlined a process that involves developing a draft plan, testing that draft plan through a formal exercise, and then creating a finalized plan. In response to a question from Mr. Biton, Mr. Fisher confirmed that a draft plan that can be executed if necessary is expected by the end of January, with the fully developed plan on track for completion by the March 2026 deadline.

## 3) Cummings School renovation plan update

The committee received an update on the assessment of the Cummings School. Mr. Raiche reported that a contract has been signed with the architectural firm Beyer Blinder Belle to investigate necessary upgrades to address deficiencies in ADA compliance, electrical systems, plumbing, and structural integrity. Mr. Raiche clarified that this work does not complicate the current MSBA process and provides the city with flexibility, noting the building's potential use as adult office space, a center for basic needs services, or as swing space. Mr. Henry projected that the investigative report from the contractors would be ready for presentation around May. Ms. Pitone confirmed that this assessment constitutes essential foundational work, regardless of the building's ultimate disposition. Dr. Phillips reiterated the potential uses the district is considering, including adult office space, SCALE, basic needs services, and swing space.

## 4) Updates on school building environment healthfulness

Ms. Sait explained that this item was initiated to follow up on a 2024 joint resolution concerning climate change resilience and the decarbonization of school buildings. Ms. Raddassi clarified that the next step, per the SEU collective bargaining agreement, is for SPS legal staff and the City Law Department to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Ms. Pitone highlighted that the MSBA has reopened its Accelerated Repair Program (ARP) for roofs, windows and doors, and heat pumps. Mr. Raiche responded that heat pump work requires swing space. He added that the city is tracking needed roof projects for the West, Healey, and Kennedy schools. Because the West project is further along in design, the city intends to proceed with that work without MSBA assistance to avoid delays, while the Healey and Kennedy Schools remain candidates for the MSBA ARP.

## 5) Menstrual product dispensers in school buildings

Ms. Barry shared an update from the Director of School Health Services, Ms. Elizabeth Quaratiello. A pilot program is underway to align restocking frequencies with other city buildings; Winter Hill School is restocked every 28 days and East Somerville Community School every 56 days, where the department opted for a less expensive product line to assess the new program. At all other schools, custodians refill dispensers and notify staff when supplies are low, a system that has proven effective. Additionally, a dispenser was installed in the gender-neutral bathroom at the Argenziano School, which had previously lacked one.

## 6) Brown School foundation

The committee discussed the condition of the Brown School's foundation. Mr. Henry reported that an existing crack has widened due to the erosion of old filler material. A purchase order has been issued to a contractor to fill the crack to prevent water and pest entry. The foundation is monitored quarterly. Mr. Raiche explained that the issue is likely due to the building's age and stress from a nearby tree's roots. He assured the committee that, based on evaluations by structural engineers, the crack does not present a structural or safety concern. The current mitigation plan is continued quarterly monitoring. Mr. Biton requested to remain involved and have quarterly reports shared with Ms. Barry. Ms. Pitone requested that information about the monitoring be made more publicly accessible.

## 7) Climate change and snow day planning

Ms. Lathan provided an overview of the City's approach to snow day planning. She explained that the snow removal budget does not directly correlate with the amount of snowfall, as the city must be prepared for any forecast to ensure

public safety. A snow emergency meeting is called when snowfall is forecasted to exceed four inches. She clarified that while not every snow day is a snow emergency, every snow emergency results in a snow day for safety reasons, depending on the timing of the storm relative to school hours.

8) Snow and ice removal on different surfaces in schoolyards

The committee discussed the challenges of clearing snow and ice from modern schoolyard safety surfaces. Dr. Phillips noted that play structures are often closed after any snowfall because the poured-in-place rubber surfaces are difficult to clear. In response to an inquiry about using a powered snow brush, Ms. Lathan provided a technical explanation of why this solution is unsuitable. She stated that any form of shoveling or brushing, even without metal, damages the expensive poured-in-place surfaces. She clarified that powered brushes are designed for synthetic turf, which has "blades of movable plastic" and an infill base, a fundamentally different construction from the solid rubberized play surfaces. Mr. Biton emphasized that year-round accessibility should be a key consideration in the design of new schools. Ms. Raddassi provided critical context, noting that overwhelming community feedback during past design processes has shown a strong preference for poured-in-place rubber, creating the current trade-off between a desired surface and a maintenance challenge. The committee noted the contrast with more durable but less preferred rubber mat tiles. Chair Clingan suggested that leaf blowers could be a potential solution for clearing light snow.

The meeting adjourned at 7:49pm.

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Mrs. Barish, seconded by Mr. Biton, to accept the report of the School Committee Meeting for the Joint School Building Facilities and Maintenance Subcommittee Meeting: December 8, 2025

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

**Ms. Pitone:** Through the Chair, raised a concern brought forward by a constituent regarding janitorial staffing for the city. She noted uncertainty about whether the issue should be addressed by the Buildings Committee, as it does not involve a physical building, and referenced a suggestion to route it through that committee. She asked that leadership confer with the City Council to determine whether the matter is best handled there or referred back to the district.

**Mr. Biton:** We would be looked into it.

## **IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **A. MSBA**

**Dr. Carmona:** Not specifically regarding the MSBA; But this work is connected to the MSBA process. I know the Community Advisory Groups (CAGs) are still deliberating on their final decisions, and at this time there is nothing additional to share from that group. I can share that the Educational Leadership Team (ELT) continues to meet regularly to identify district strengths and needs. They have completed in-depth assessments of special education and multilingual learner education needs. We are continuing these conversations with the city's designer team and Owner's Project Manager, as well as with central office educators. Site visits to different buildings and meetings with educators and parents are also planned and currently underway as part of this ongoing process.

## **X. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. Special Education Stabilization Fund (vote)**

**President city Council, Mr. Davis,** requested to excuse himself from this item

**Dr. Carmona:** I want to share some context regarding Circuit Breaker funds, which are provided by the state to the city. In the last quarter of 2024, the Circuit Breaker funds were received around July 7, 2024, placing them in Fiscal Year 2025. These funds were not spent, and after discussion with City CFO Ed Bean, we determined that, consistent with best municipal finance practices, the funds became free cash. We discussed the importance of creating a dedicated fund to better manage special education costs, which are often highly variable and unpredictable. For

example, transportation costs can fluctuate significantly from year to year. Currently, we do not have a sufficient buffer to respond to these changes. Establishing this fund would allow the district to better manage out-of-district placements and transportation expenses. This approach aligns with municipal finance law and practices used by many other districts. The proposal before you reflects this recommendation and provides a sound option for responding to unexpected special education costs.

**Ms. Pitone:** Through the Chair, to the Superintendent how is this fund financed? Are we voting to establish an account, and if so, where would the money come from?

**Chair Krepchin:** The funding would come from Circuit Breaker funds.

**Ms. Pitone:** So the intent is to use the Circuit Breaker money for this fund? That's my understanding.

**Dr. Carmona:** Yes. Approximately \$430,000 was received through Circuit Breaker reimbursement.

**Ms. Pitone:** And this would be managed within the existing budget, with the proposal being to place these funds into a dedicated account?

**Dr. Carmona:** This is not an annual allocation. These funds were received at the end of the funding cycle in July 2024, which placed them in Fiscal Year 2025. Because they arrived late in the cycle, they were not expended. Normally, Circuit Breaker funds are retroactive and time-limited, but in this case, the city determined that the unspent funds became free cash. Rather than returning them to the city, we are proposing to place them into a stabilization fund to help manage variable special education costs.

**Chair Krepchin:** In other words, if we do not take this action, the funds would become free cash.

**Dr. Carmona:** To clarify, these funds were intended to be spent, but we exceeded the allowable time period for using them. Circuit Breaker funds can only be used within a one-year window, and once that period passed, the funds became free cash for the city. It is important to remember that Circuit Breaker is a reimbursement program. The district pays all special education expenses upfront, and the state reimburses a portion of those costs in the following year—up to approximately 70 percent of eligible expenses. This means we must always budget for the full cost in advance. What we are trying to do is create a cleaner and more consistent accounting system. While Circuit Breaker funds can sometimes be used for salaries and services, this proposed fund would be specifically designated for out-of-district placements and transportation costs, helping us better manage those variable expenses.

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Mrs. Barish seconded by Dr. Phillips, that the School Committee moves that the City vote to accept the provisions of Mass. Gen. L. c. 40 §13E to establish a Special Education Reserve Fund to be utilized in upcoming fiscal years to pay, without further appropriation, for unanticipated or unbudgeted costs of special education and recovery high school programs, out-of-district tuition or transportation; and provided further, that the balance in such reserve fund shall not exceed two (2%) percent of the annual net school spending of the school district and that funds shall only be distributed from the reserve funds after a majority vote of the School Committee and a majority vote of the City Council.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

#### **B. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual (Out of Order)**

The following policy is being presented the evening for the first reading

- Policy Manual Section A, B, and C

**Chair Krepchin:** This brings us to the first reading of the policy, which covers sections A, B, and C. I suggest that the

future chair consider holding a second and third reading, as by that time there will be four new members on the School Committee. This decision will be at the discretion of the new chair. Members can ask questions during this first reading, but I also want to flag for the new members that they should allow themselves time to review the packet thoroughly, as it contains a substantial amount of material.

**Ms. Barish:** I wanted to let everyone know that I included a brief summary in the packet outlining what was discussed or decided in subcommittee. I have not reviewed it in detail to ensure all changes were captured exactly as stated, but Alicia Mellon from MASC, who is managing this part of the process, is very attentive and will correct any issues if notified.

**Ms. Pitone:** I want to express my gratitude to Ms. Barish and the Rules Committee for their extensive work on this. As colleagues review these changes, I encourage them to refer to the full minutes, which are available on Google Drive. The minutes provide detailed context on each topic and the rationale behind decisions, and I recommend consulting them for a deeper understanding.

**Ms. Barish:** I have more comprehensive notes beyond the report I produced, which were not included because the full details weren't necessary. These notes are in my Google Drive, and I can share them with the next chair so they have access if there are more detailed questions. Members can also reach out to Alicia Mellon at MASC, as she took thorough notes as well.

**Ms. Pitone:** I have a related question. As outgoing members roll off, how can they share materials on the Google Drive with new members? For example, if Ms. Barish wants to share her notes from Rules Committee meetings, what is the process for doing so once she has left? Perhaps Ms. Garcia can look into this and email guidance to members on how to maintain continuity of content for new members.

### **C. Superintendent Contract**

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Dr. Ackman, seconded by Mr. Biton, to authorize the chair to sign the Superintendent contract

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote

## **XI. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**Mr. Biton:** I wanted to highlight an item from the School Building Facilities and Maintenance Subcommittee. In last year's resolution regarding zero-carbon buildings and climate-conscious facilities, Councilor Saeed raised a question about how reports on the healthfulness of our buildings will be shared with the City Council and School Committee. The liaison reminded us that this reporting requirement is included in the SEU agreement. While I do not recall the specific clause, the agreement and any necessary MOU between the SEU and Somerville Public Schools should enable the annual transmission of such reports. I am requesting that a future meeting include an update on this process and that we ensure the first report is provided by July, as outlined in the resolution.

**Mr. Green:** I want to note that state law also requires monitoring, and we have not yet established an official MOU between the city and the schools regarding this reporting. Step one is to complete that MOU, which should be prioritized and passed, ideally in the spring.

## **XII. CONDOLENCES**

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

Dr. Kim Phan Vo - *Mother of Francesca Nguyen Vo Broekman - Kennedy Family Liaison.*

### **XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

#### **Related documents:**

Agenda

[Strategic Plan Update](#)

Submitted by: E Garcia

**Attach Documents Starting on the next page**

**SCHOOL COMMITTEE  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CITY HALL  
REGULAR MEETING – DECEMBER 15, 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](http://somervillema.gov/GovTVLive)**

Somerville Public Schools provides **simultaneous interpretation** of this meeting in Spanish, Portuguese, or Haitian Creole. **You must register 48 hours in advance and indicate your preferred language:**

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Aw93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Aw93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg)

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SPSSC25

**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. AWARDS AND CITATIONS**

**A. Recognition of service for Outgoing School Committee Members**

*Ilana Krepchin- Chair*

*Dr. Sarah Phillips-Vice Chair*

*Ellenor Barish*

*Honorable Mayor Katjana Ballantyne*

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT – In person**

To participate in Public Comment remotely please use the following Zoom link:  
[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Aw93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Aw93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg)

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087  
Password: SPSSC25

**V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- November 3, 2025

**VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

- A. District Report
  - Strategic Plan Report

- B. PERSONNEL REPORT
  - December

**VII. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES****A. School Committee Meeting for the Joint School Building Facilities and Maintenance**

**Subcommittee Meeting: December 8, 2025 (Mr. Biton)**

**MOTION:** To accept the report of the Joint School Building Facilities and Maintenance Subcommittee Meeting for December 8, 2025

**VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. MSBA Update

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Special Education Stabilization Fund (Vote)
- B. Superintendent Contract
  - Motion:** to authorize the chair to sign the Superintendent contract
- C. Somerville Public Schools Policy Manual
  - The following policy is being presented the evening for the **first** reading
    - Policy Manual Section A, B, and C

**X. ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS****XI. CONDOLENCE****XII. ADJOURNMENT**

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

**Español - Para Interpretación**

Para ver la reunión regular del Comité Escolar el 01 de diciembre a las 7:00pm, en vivo desde su casa, visite el siguiente Enlace y seleccione GovTV:  
<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/communications-and-community-engagement/somerville-city-tv>

Para poder escuchar en vivo la interpretación en simultáneo de esta reunión en español, portugués o criollo haitiano, debe registrarse y solicitar el servicio con 48 horas de anticipación e indicar su idioma de preferencia. Para registrarse haga clic en el enlace a continuación

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Aw93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Aw93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg)

ID de la reunión: 810 5048 0087

Contraseña: SPSSC25

The items listed are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair to be discussed at the meeting. Not all items may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law

**Português - Para Interpretacão**

Para assistir à Reunião Regular do Comitê Escolar 01 de Dezembro às 19h, ao vivo de casa, visite o seguinte link e selecione GovTV:

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

Para ouvir ao vivo a interpretação simultânea da Reunião Regular em espanhol, português ou crioulo haitiano, é necessário fazer sua inscrição com 48 horas de antecedência e indicar o idioma de sua preferência. Para se inscrever, clique no link abaixo:

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Awv93fR60hyC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awv93fR60hyC37Xib1zg)

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

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**Kreyòl ayisyen - Pou entèpretasyon**

Pou gade reyinyon regilye Komite Lekòl la, 01 Desanm a 7:00PM an dirèk lakay ou, 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, ou dwe enskri 48 èdtan davans epi endike lang ou prefere a. Pou enskri, klike sou lyen ki anba a:

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Awv93fR60hyC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awv93fR60hyC37Xib1zg)

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