

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**Monday, March 2, 2026 - Regular Meeting**

7:01 p.m. – City Hall Chambers

**Members present:** President Davis, Member Pitone (Join Remote), Member Lippens, Member. Eldridge, Member Green, Mayor Wilson, Member Biton, and Chair Dr. Ackman. **Members Absent:** Dr. Stellman

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 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 –8 –President Davis, Member. Pitone, Member Lippens, Member. Eldridge, Member Green, Mayor Wilson, Member Biton, and Chair Dr. Ackman **ABSENT** – Dr. Stellman

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

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

**Aidan Becker – School & Senior Updates**

**School Events:**

Recently, Somerville High School successfully hosted its first semi-formal dances for sophomores and juniors in the past three years. In prior years, several challenges prevented these events from taking place. Their return marks an important step toward restoring traditions and increasing student engagement. The events were well received and contributed positively to school culture.

Another recent event, the Class Cup, demonstrated a noticeable increase in school spirit. Student participation and enthusiasm were especially strong, reflecting a broader shift in the student body toward greater involvement in school activities.

**Senior Updates:**

Senior prom will be held at the State Room in Boston this year. This venue represents a higher cost compared to previous years, making it the most expensive prom to date. Despite this, strong community support and donations have helped make the event more accessible. Many students have been able to fully or partially cover ticket costs through financial assistance within their communities.

To date, nearly 200 tickets have been sold across all school communities, including Elm Community, New Wave Full Circle, Broadway, Highland, and Beacon. These efforts have helped ensure broad participation and inclusivity for the senior class.

**Bhavika – Club Highlights & Student Initiatives**

**Highland Advocate (Club Highlight):**

This week’s featured club is the Highland Advocate, a newly established student newspaper currently in its pilot year. The club was co-founded by junior Carmen Wheeler, who also serves as Editor-in-Chief.

The creation of the Highland Advocate was driven by the absence of a school newspaper in recent years. Recognizing that students interested in journalism, media, and creative expression lacked a platform, the founders worked to establish a space for student voices.

With support from Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, particularly the graphic design department, the club has received guidance and access to printing resources. As a result, more than a dozen students have already gained experience in writing and producing newspaper articles.

The publication covers a wide range of topics, including student life, local and international issues, historical perspectives, and pop culture. For example, students recently interviewed a student band, Kludos Return, showcasing emerging talent within the school. Printed copies of the newspaper are distributed in classrooms, and student readership has been strong, contributing to a more connected and informed school community.

The Highland Advocate has made significant progress in a short period of time, and its leadership is optimistic about continued growth and expanded reach.

## **Additional Club Updates**

### **Community Services Club:**

The Community Services Club will attend the Inspired Massachusetts Youth Leadership Institute on March 18. This program provides students with opportunities to develop leadership skills and create impactful community projects.

Last year, participants developed a multicultural reading initiative aimed at Pre-K and kindergarten students. Student volunteers visited the Capuano Early Childhood Center to read multicultural books, promoting diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness from an early age. The initiative was supported through collaboration with a multicultural literacy organization.

This year, the club plans to continue its involvement in the Leadership Institute while expanding its outreach efforts beyond the high school. Their work reflects a growing commitment to community engagement and service-based learning.

### ***Questions/Comments***

**Member Biton:** I'm excited to see a student newspaper, I'm surprised there wasn't one already. Do you know how often it will be published?

**Aidan Becker:** It's planned to be monthly. They've only released a January issue so far but are meeting weekly and expect to start regular monthly publishing within a couple of weeks.

## **III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Ackman read the public comment regulations and asked those who had signed up to comment at this time. 8 Public Comments in person and 9 Public comments via Zoom.

**Sarah Campbell:** Hi, my name is Sarah Campbell. I live at 18 Trull St, and I have a third grader at Brown and a sixth grader at Kennedy. I'm here to express concern about the proposed closure of the Brown School, which is ranked 101 in Massachusetts by U.S. News & World Report and has strong reading and math scores. I'm also concerned about the proposed replacement—a very large school of about 900 students, roughly two-thirds the size of the high school. I've heard the rationale is to maximize state funding by building a larger school, but I question whether "bigger is better" is the right approach for students. A school of that size could have 6–8 classes per grade, compared to Brown's current structure of about 4, and I worry about how it will be managed and whether it can maintain academic quality without significant administrative and financial support. I'm also concerned about equity and diversity impacts. If Brown closes, students may be redistributed in ways that could affect the demographic balance of other schools, potentially increasing segregation between neighborhoods. Overall, I believe the city should focus on strengthening schools rather than making them larger, and that smaller schools are better for

students and learning outcomes.

**Caitlin Rameau: My name is Caitlin Rameau. I am a third grader at the Brown School.** I am here because I don't want you to shut down the Brown School. Even though I may not be there when it happens, other kids will be, and I know they will be very upset. I am very, very sad about the possibility of the Brown School closing. Last year I cried when I had to leave Ms. Bornn's class, but I think this would feel much worse—like not just leaving a classroom, but losing your whole school.

**Leigha Charboneau: My name is Leigha Charboneau, and I am a third-grade teacher at the West Somerville Neighborhood School.** I am speaking tonight in support of prioritizing additional staff in next year's budget, specifically more interventionist positions. Currently, West Somerville does not have a math interventionist at all, and our reading interventionist is split between two buildings, even though we have two dedicated intervention blocks in our schedule. As a result, I am not able to meet all of my students' academic needs during this time without additional support. Each week, the other third-grade teacher and I meet to review student data and plan instructional groups for our intervention blocks. Much of this time is spent reteaching grade-level content that students struggled with or did not master during regular instruction. This work is incredibly important and has helped many students achieve mastery and demonstrate meaningful growth, but there is still a significant gap for students who lack foundational skills. During our literacy intervention block, our reading specialist works with students who need support with foundational skills from previous grade levels, while I focus on students who need help with grade-level content. However, because she is shared between two schools, we must make difficult decisions about which students receive support. In math, the challenges are even greater. Only one group can receive additional support at a time. I still have a reteaching group planned from assessments given before winter break that I have not yet been able to address because I am stretched so thin across this block, trying to meet all student needs. Without additional interventionists, classroom teachers are forced to choose between supporting students who need foundational skill development, helping students who are struggling with grade-level material, or providing enrichment for students who have already mastered content. All students deserve our time and attention. With more interventionists, we would be able to meet these diverse needs more effectively and equitably. I hope you will support the SEU's vision for high-quality education in Somerville Public Schools. It is what our students deserve.

**Kayla Burgess: My name is Kayla Burgess, and I am the sixth-grade math and science teacher at the West Somerville Neighborhood School.** I am speaking tonight in support of prioritizing additional staffing in next year's budget, specifically more interventionist positions. As you just heard, West Somerville currently does not have a math interventionist. As a second-year teacher, I look to educators like Leigha and her third-grade teaching colleague as models for how to maximize time and energy to meet student needs. Even with strong classroom-based intervention, it is not feasible for classroom teachers alone to serve all students as they deserve. We are forced to make difficult choices, which is inequitable and unfair. Now, consider those same students who struggled with foundational math skills in third grade, three years later as sixth graders. Because of insufficient intervention support throughout elementary school, many are now several grade levels behind. This year, 32% of my sixth-grade students began the year two or more grade levels below where they should be. At a critical stage in their development, these students are becoming academically disengaged, which also impacts their confidence and social well-being. In professional development focused on equity and excellence in SPS, I was asked to disaggregate student achievement data by factors such as income and race. Unsurprisingly, I saw that low-income students and Black and Brown students in my classes are those most in need of support largely due to factors outside of their control. While the district emphasizes equity, intervention services remain underfunded, despite being one of the most effective tools for closing opportunity gaps. Instead, classroom teachers are expected to meet all needs independently, an unrealistic and unsustainable expectation. This approach is not only unfair to students who need additional support, but also to teachers who are being asked to meet an impossible standard. I hope to remain in this profession long-term, but it is disheartening to be told that I am solely responsible for bringing students up multiple grade levels in foundational knowledge.

**Hannah De Souza:** Good evening, my name is Hannah De Souza, and I am an educator at the Argenziano School where I have worked for the last 19 years. I am speaking tonight in support of prioritizing ESL staffing in next year's budget. I'm speaking on behalf of myself and other SEI-1 teachers whose 5 classrooms will be closing after this school year. My colleagues Gina Yarmel and Diana Garity are joining us virtually this evening. The SEI-1 program is a specialized instructional model that serves immigrant newcomer students at the beginning stages of learning English. Our program has been part of the Argenziano community for the last 25 years. With the closing of this program at our school there will be an increased need for supporting multilingual learners in general education classrooms. We are asking you to support the conversion of our classroom positions to much needed ESL specialists. Students who were receiving ESL support during all subject areas in the SEI-1 classroom throughout the day in this program will now be integrated into general education classrooms next year. In addition to the closing of the SEI-1 program, Argenziano will be welcoming the AIM Autism program. There are multilingual learner students in this program as well that will further increase the number of students at Argenziano who will require specialized and dedicated English Language instruction from ESL specialists. Right now, ESL specialists are only able to push-in during literacy blocks or intervention blocks, and sometimes not even for the entire block. In some classrooms ESL specialists are supporting as many as 9 multilingual learners at a time for as little as 45 minutes a day. As teachers of multilingual learners, we know that language learning happens all day, not just during literacy time, and we believe that our students deserve better. In order to best support our students, we need more ESL specialists so that there is time to co-plan and co-teach, and so our students have equitable access to the curriculum. We need to continue to make Somerville schools welcoming to immigrant families and we need to maintain supports for multilingual learners, not take them away. In order to meet to the unique cultural and linguistic needs of our students we hope you will consider converting SEI-1 positions or adding ESL specialists to best serve our multilingual learners.

**César Urrunaga: My name is César Urrunaga. I live at 45 Oxford Street.** I am the parent of a 10th grader and a seventh-grade math teacher at ESCS. I am speaking tonight in support of prioritizing additional staffing in next year's budget, specifically math interventionists. I would like to share what math intervention has meant for students and what it has looked like in my classroom. Last year, my students had access to math intervention, and I saw firsthand how it helped them access the seventh-grade curriculum. In class, I would hear students say, "We just did this in math intervention," or "Mrs. Dinovis just taught us that." It was clear how valuable that support was. This year, however, we do not have math intervention in the middle grades at ESCS due to staffing limitations. I have several students who would greatly benefit from it—students who need just a bit of extra support to bridge gaps so they can fully engage with the curriculum. Some concepts, such as operations with fractions and integers, are particularly challenging. While we try to address these gaps through review lessons and programs like i-Ready, it is not enough. Nothing replaces targeted, small-group math intervention. Every moment spent reteaching foundational skills in class is time taken away from new instruction. There simply is not enough time in the year to both fill learning gaps and fully teach the curriculum. While intervention is not a complete solution, it makes a significant difference in student learning. I hope you will support the SEU's vision for high-quality education in Somerville Public Schools. It is what our students deserve

**Ray Woodcock: Hi, my name is Ray Woodcock, and I am a fourth-grade teacher at East Somerville.** I am speaking tonight in support of prioritizing additional staffing in next year's budget, specifically additional ESL specialists. Recently, administrators have raised concerns about the number of fourth-grade students who are significantly below reading benchmarks. In my classroom, 11 out of 20 students are currently reading below benchmark, and this pattern is consistent across all four fourth-grade classes. In response, administrators arranged additional coaching to support teachers in implementing reading interventions during X block, since fourth grade does not currently have access to pull-out services. While I am grateful for this coaching and willing to provide intervention, it is frustrating that this is the only support available to students. A large portion of students below benchmark are English language learners, and current ESL staffing at East Somerville is not sufficient to provide the high-quality services students are entitled to and need in order to grow. DESE guidelines state that students at WIDA levels 3 and 4 should receive at least 45 minutes of ESL services, while students at levels 1 and 2 should receive double that. However, current staffing levels at East Somerville do not allow for this to be fully implemented. Instead,

staffing constraints lead to inconsistent service delivery, including situations where students rely on dual-licensed teachers rather than receiving services from dedicated ESL specialists. While dual-licensed teachers are highly skilled, they cannot replace the individualized support of a full-time ESL teacher. In fourth grade, our ESL specialist is also split across three grade levels, requiring them to support multiple curricula and six teachers' pacing simultaneously. As a result, there is limited capacity for effective co-planning. One specialist cannot meaningfully plan with six teachers within the allotted CPT time. Without adequate co-planning and consistent ESL staffing, students miss out on intentionally designed supports and accommodations that are essential to their learning.

**Naina Sood: My name is Naina Sood Fox. I teach fifth-grade math and science in the Neighborhood Program at East.**

I am speaking tonight in support of prioritizing staffing in next year's budget, specifically regarding the inclusion model at East and across the district. This year, I have had the opportunity to be part of the inclusion model pilot program, and I cannot emphasize enough how positive it has been for my students, for my teaching practice, and for my ability to reach all learners. East is one of the highest-need schools in the district, with many English language learners and students with individualized education plans. In my classroom, students' academic levels range from kindergarten through fifth grade. In past years, it has often felt impossible to meet all of their needs effectively. This year, for the first time in a long time, I feel that I am actually able to reach all of my students. This is due to the support of having an inclusion teacher in my classroom. She works with students with the most intensive needs, while I am able to focus on the rest of the class. As a result, I am seeing meaningful growth across all students. I also want to share some data. We administer the i-Ready assessment in September and again in January. Over those four months, my students have achieved nearly a full year's expected growth about 94% of typical annual growth. I began the year with only three students at or above grade level; by January, that number had increased to 13. I also started the year with about half of my 20 students performing two or more grade levels below; that number has now decreased to 12. Both my data and my experience reflect the positive impact of the inclusion model. It has also had a meaningful impact on my well-being as a teacher. I hope you will consider prioritizing staffing to support and expand this model.

**Karina Johanson:** My name is Karina Johanson, and I am a fifth-grade ELA and social studies teacher in the Neighborhood Program at East Somerville. I am speaking tonight in support of prioritizing the expansion of the inclusion model in next year's budget. This model supports shared responsibility between special education and general education teachers, ensuring that all students' needs are met while also helping prevent educator burnout. There are 21 students in the fifth-grade inclusion classroom. At the beginning of the year, i-Ready data showed that seven students were reading two grade levels below, and eight students were reading three or more grade levels below meaning 71% of students required significant support during Tier 1 instruction and additional intervention during X block. This is not new data to me. After eight years in this district, I see similar patterns year after year. Many students' literacy needs go unmet early on, beginning as early as kindergarten, often because general education teachers are responsible for too many competing demands, including supporting students with significant needs alongside the rest of the class. This year has been different. In the inclusion model classroom, the special education teacher focuses on five students with intensive needs, while I am able to focus on the rest of the class, particularly students who also require significant support. The results have been strong. Mid-year i-Ready data shows that nine out of ten of those students have already met 100% of their annual growth goals. Some have exceeded expectations by 200–300% and are now close to grade level. One student has shown 400% growth and is now reading at an early fifth-grade level. We are only halfway through the year, but the impact is already clear: this model is working. It is especially effective in high-need schools like ours in Somerville. I strongly encourage continued investment in and expansion of the inclusion model. Thank you

**Alison Cichowlas: Hi, I'm Allison Cichowlas. I live at 89 Rogers Ave.** I'm going to take a moment and say thank you so much to the teachers who've been speaking up for additional funding for staffing. It's fantastic to hear your points, and I can hear in your voices how much you really, really care about our kids. My kindergartner is at the Brown School. I hope his two little sisters will be attending, too, in the next few years, and I wanted to have some comments and questions about its future. First, big picture, process-wise, it's difficult for me as a parent to

understand who is responsible for the decisions about the future of the Brown. I've read school committee does a formal evaluation before we close any school in any circumstance, but also from watching the last school committee meeting, it sounds like, that evaluation, that investigation doesn't actually start until the town has committed to taking more state money, which comes conditional on closing brown, and it feels like a little bit of a circle. I hope we can have some clearer information about what's going on, who's responsible for the decision, what happens in what order. And then secondly, I'd like to speak in favor of keeping the Brown School operational. It serves many important needs in the Somerville community, goes without saying it's a fantastic school by the numbers, but also, it's a public option for families who are looking for a smaller school, for young kids who need that kind of environment without the Brown, families would need to go to the private system for this. That's not an option for a lot of families. It takes cars off the road in our whole city by giving a walkable school towards 5 and 6, providing needed seats on the west side of Somerville. The other schools out here are already oversubscribed, might be even more so with new developments on the Red Line in the next few years. And last of all, neighborhood schools are a foundation of local community, local connections, just a building block for everything else. I'm really worried that the proposal to close the Brown hasn't taken this into consideration. It'll give our community worse education for our kids, worse traffic for everyone. Thanks for listening.

**Kelly Williamson: My name is Kelly Williamson. I live in Ward 6, and I'm the mother of four young sons, ages 2, 4, 6, and 8. My 2 oldest children attend the Brown School, currently in kindergarten and second grade.** We hope, like Allison, to send our younger sons to the Brown School as well. I'm concerned about the recent updates shared regarding the new school building and its impact on the Brown School's future. When we chose the Brown School for our children's education, we did so for 3 main reasons. One, walkability. It's the closest school to our home. 2. School size, roughly 225 children attend the Brown School, which means that every single child is known by every single adult in the school. And the children are given quite a bit of autonomy within the walls of its small building. And three, the age of its students. The Brown School is the only K-5 school in the district, which was its most compelling characteristic as we considered sending our five-year-old to school for the first time. A 900-capacity building located at the former Winter Hill site meets none of those criteria for our family. We would likely choose to send our children to West or Kennedy instead. First, the new school is not walkable for us. Our half mile walk would become a one-and-a-half-mile walk, which would realistically become a car ride, something we loathe as urban dwellers and aim to avoid at all costs. Secondly, it's not a small student population. 900 students are quadruple the size of the Brown school population. And finally, the proposed new school is not a K to 5 school. The social and behavioral problems of 6th to 8th graders are drastically different than those of elementary school learners, and that concerns me. When we moved to Somerville, we valued the neighborhood school model and the choice the district offered families to find the right learning environment for their children, eliminating 2 small school environments, one neighborhood school and the one and only K to 5 school in the district drastically reduces choice for Somerville families. Prior to committing to the proposed 900 student building on the former Winter Hill site, I urge the school committee to have concrete answers that address enrollment needs on the west side of the city, catchment reassignments district wide, and accompanying walkability and transportation needs for those in dead zones. as well as a transition plan for the Brown school prior to it.

**Priscilla Ewan: Hi, my name is Priscilla Ewan. I live in Ward 5 at 85 Rogers Ave, and I am a Brown school parent.** My older child has thrived at the Brown school. It feels like everyone there knows him. And the Brown School is the heartbeat of our neighborhood. I'm looking forward to sending my daughter there next year, and I'm very disappointed that the district wants to close the Brown. As a public-school teacher in another district. I'm also very concerned about what the closure process will be for the Brown school teachers. If it's not handled well, I worry that you will lose some great teachers much sooner than the 2031-2032 school year. Thanks.

**Heidi Given: My name is Heidi Given, and I'm a math interventionist at the East Somerville Community School. Previously, I was the district equity coach.** Now, in a role in which I closely screen hundreds of students quarterly and monitor testing data. I have a much deeper understanding of the structural, systemic, and staffing issues that underlie the academic inequalities that we see when we examine our MCAS data.

Tonight, I am speaking to the need for more math interventionists. I am a singular interventionist in a school with approximately 740 students. My screening data indicates a range of between 15 to 50% of any given grade level could benefit from receiving math intervention, yet I am one person and there is no way to meet that level of need. In fact, I am not even able to serve all of our grade levels as Cesar spoke of tonight. The inequitable decisions this leads me to have to make greatly pains me. I pull six small groups of students daily working intensively on foundational math skills around targeted concepts and topics. Many of my students gain understanding and comfort and confidence and have shown significant growth on their i-Ready scores, and a small few continue to struggle not demonstrating growth. Documenting their struggles while receiving Tier 2 intervention supports the work of our child study team. It is so very true that my school would benefit from a second or even a third math interventionist, similar to staffing ratios for reading, MLE, SEL, and special education services. And it is true that the district as a whole needs more math interventionists. Did you know there are only four of us across the city serving only 4 schools? Other schools in our district and their students have no access to math intervention. Please prioritize and fund more math interventionists so that all of our students can receive the instruction they need. In order to thrive and be successful in an increasingly digital, technological.

**Jeremiah Hay:** Hi, thanks everybody. Hope you're all having a nice night. I did want to say my wife, Esme von Hoffman, that she was unable to talk earlier. I can't tell if it's a Zoom issue or what, but if somebody could circle back to her, that'd be wonderful. I do think that the mayor and the superintendent are absolutely right that real problems exist within the Somerville Public Schools. So, just to name a couple, staff compensation and the cost and availability of aftercare, the appropriate need. Nothing that we've heard about all tonight, and I'm sure we'll continue to hear about this evening, and achievement levels and gaps around the district are real needs. And I was thrilled last week to hear the mayor acknowledge that our school system needs serious investment. I could not agree more. But honestly, I have a hard time wrapping my head around the idea that the only investment that we're here to talk about tonight is pouring hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars into a new building while closing one of the best schools in the district. I know that there's been an incredible amount of time spent developing the solution, but that is not a good reason to move it forward. I think the basic fact is that this equation just doesn't make sense, especially at a time when the federal attitude towards public education, health, and social supports generally have made our state and local services and resources far more precious for many families. New buildings don't make better schools. I want to say that again. New buildings do not make better schools. And we don't need big new buildings to provide every child in Somerville with a great education. We need strong, dedicated teachers and staff, deeply engaged and committed school leaders, and an active, invested school community. And we have all of that already at the Brown School. So, what are we doing? We're closing it for a new discount on a building that's much bigger than what we need. New buildings and great schools are not the same thing, and I encourage, I urge all of our school committee members, for whom I have a great deal of respect, to realize that we have just lost the thread here. And to do what you can to push our investments and our focus back into school quality and not school construction, even if that means harder solutions. Thank you.

**Swetha Kalluri:** Hello, my name is Swetha Kalari, and I'm a math interventionist at Winter Hill. I am speaking tonight in support of prioritizing adding additional math interventionists into next year's budget. Currently, there are four district-wide math interventionists servicing the four of the highest need schools. While we do our best to meet the need, we are not able to provide intervention services to all the students who would benefit from the small group intervention support. We work in 8-week cycles, so we can switch students out and see more students. However, some students would benefit from meeting a math interventionist throughout the year, similar to reading services. Because math interventionists work across multiple grade levels, we have developed a strong understanding of mathematical learning progressions, and we have the resources to meet students where they are. Which is often 2 or 3 grade levels below their current grade level. While classroom teachers work tirelessly to meet the needs of all learners. Addressing such significant gaps in the classroom can be incredibly challenging. With small group support, students are able to talk through their thinking and learn from one another's ideas. They play engaging games that strengthen specific skills, and they take on challenging problems that build both confidence

and perseverance. From these interactions, students begin to see themselves as capable, confident learners who can succeed in mathematics. Expanding math intervention services would allow us to reach more students consistently and intervene early to close academic gaps as early as possible. Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Ksenia Samokhvalova: Hi, can you hear me? Hi, my name is Ksenia Samokhvalova. I live on at 75**

**Irving Street in Somerville and Ward 6**, and I have 2 children in the Somerville Public Schools, a third grader, the Brown, and a former Brown school student who is now in seventh grade at the West. I'm calling to express my extreme concern, because it appears that the recommendation of the Construction Advisory group to build the biggest capacity school at 115 Sycamore Street is now being used to imply that the city will be closing the Brown School. Once the winter school is built. I want to remind the mayor and the school committee that the construction advisory Group has not made a recommendation about the closure of the Brown School, and has explicitly called for this decision to be made by the school committee. As a parent who has been part of the Brown School community for 8 years now, I want to implore the school committee to not abdicate their responsibility to make a thoughtful decision whether the only way to proceed is to close our school. I'd like to join the construction advisory group's frustration about the lack of vision and educational perspective from the school committee on the preferred student population size and alignment of options with long-term goals. No matter the size of the school, there is a need for the school committees, Somerville Public Schools, and the city to provide robust plans for staffing management, redistricting, safe routes to school and programming, and a compelling vision for how this new building will maximize benefits for the district and the community. This vision must come from the elected officials of the city and the school committee level. To date, we have not seen analysis done to support the decision to close the Brown School, which is frankly completely unacceptable. And I've requested personally multiple documents that I have not received. So, I'd like to request that the school committee makes these decisions thoughtfully. Thank you for listening.

**Esmé von Hoffman: Hi, I'm Esme von Hoffman, a current parent at the Benjamin G Brown School.** I'm confused because every time I hear the Mayor speak he talks about closing the Brown school as part of building the new Winter Hill School. But according to CAG members, CAG video recordings, and the final CAG report (see section 3), that was not what the CAG voted for. Instead, the voted to build the new Winter Hill School, potentially use it as swing space, and then years from now, after this all happened, assess what the city needed.

The decision to close the Brown School without good solutions to the following issues would be reckless and hurt students, families, teachers, and staff.

- 1) Different students have different learning needs. Many students at Brown need the small school environment to thrive for instance, sensory overload issues. Combining Winter Hill and Brown would get rid of the two smallest schools in Somerville. Also, studies from top research institutions, including the National Academy of Sciences, overwhelmingly show kids do better in small schools. If the Brown School closed, parents who could afford are already talking about sending their kids to private school – causing drops in SPS enrollment which effects budget, which would forcing the firing of teachers – but the kids most hurt would be underprivileged, minority or immigrant kids who will lose the chance at education they need. These are real children, friends. I see every day the length these families go to get their kids to the Brown school for the education they need for their child, using buses and single moms taking time off of work to drop off and pick up, etc. And these are families that have least time to advocate for themselves and are most scared due to the federal situation. Please school committee members, be these children's advocates. At a giant school no matter how you configure the building, there is no way a principal could know all the student's names, there would have to be many classes per grade (that's a large pool of kids to be in) etc. Kids who really needed a small school option would be cut out.
- 2) Closing Brown will mean that there will be no school in West Somerville except West which is already full. That's a huge geographic area with only one school. The ramifications of this will be again kids going to private school causing SPS budget cuts, increased traffic (school drop-off caused traffic has been insane enough with this snow – I can't imagine what it will be like with so many people forced to commute long distances east), many more parents not being able to get their kids into the school they want and think is best for their child, etc.

3) What happens to the teachers? What happens to the students as the Brown School nears towards shutting down? Some of the best teachers stay at SPS because they like their school community. Forcing major changes on them might cause them to leave or force them out. It's clear from listening to public comment today how much good staffing is needed in SPS

Furthermore, voters will have to vote to raise taxes to build this new building – this huge new building is not all paid for by the state – and if people think kids will be hurt in the process, traffic will get bad, etc, they will not vote for this.

Please school committee – we deeply value you – you are members of our community, be a system of checks and balances on the Somerville executive branch you were elected to be. Stand up for children and particularly marginalized kids, teachers, families – and come up with a solution that works for all of Somerville. Don't just rubber stamp a half-thought-through plan that could hurt children. Thank you for your time.

## IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT

### A. District Report

*Notes- Superintendent Update: School Committee Meeting- Monday March 2, 2026*

We have a full agenda this evening, so I'd like to begin by jumping right into our first presentation of the evening by stepping into the athletic arena and sharing some great highlights of Highlander sports this winter.

Sports are a vital part of the educational experience for middle grades and Somerville High School student-athletes, teaching discipline, teamwork, resilience, and time management — skills that support success in the classroom and beyond.

Recently, both our girls and boys varsity basketball teams competed in the state tournament, and our swimming and track & field teams have enjoyed strong seasons as well.

Highlander Hockey also continued a meaningful tradition: each year, seniors select a staff member who has had a lasting impact on their high school experience. This year, the team honored CTE instructors Matt Waldman and Jim McGrath, World Language instructor Gino Colantuono, and Math teacher Dan Bachman as positive role models.

We're grateful for their dedication to our student-athletes at Somerville High School.

Athletic commitment goes hand in hand with commitment to learning.

- **Athletics Department**

To offer us a larger glimpse into Highlander athletics, I'm pleased to welcome Athletics Director Stanley Viera to offer a presentation on the district's exceptional sports programs.

Director Viera shared his presentation (Presentation below)

### Comments/ Questions

**Member Green:** Thank you, as always. I appreciate the slide outlining a vision for athletics it's something we've struggled to clearly define as a district beyond the idea that sports are valuable. What I'm still wondering is: how do we know we're doing a good job? If we're measuring success by wins and championships, that doesn't seem aligned with our goals. But if not that, then what are we using? How do we know students are actually benefiting from the program?

**Stanley Vieira:** It's a great question. It's not just about wins and losses. We use student feedback on coaches collected anonymously each season, along with ongoing evaluations through observations of practices and games. We focus on whether students are having a positive, inclusive experience. We also build in leadership opportunities like the Captain's Council so students have a voice. In addition, we provide annual training through the Positive Coaching Alliance, and this year we're also including parents. The goal is to ensure students have a meaningful, positive experience and that we're continuously improving the program.

**Member Green:** Just a follow-up obviously it would be inappropriate for us to direct how coaches are evaluated. But I'm curious: what kinds of questions are being asked when you gather feedback on coaches? What exactly are

we measuring?

**Stanley Vieira:** If it helps, you can email me and I can send you the exact template we use. It's consistent across the board.

**Mayor Wilson:** I appreciate you mentioning the Positive Coaching Alliance and the upcoming event. They also offer a parent workshop, and I know we previously hosted something like that with Somerville Soccer. Has there been any thought about offering that parent workshop more broadly to the wider parent community? You could likely fill an auditorium. I ask because I attended it, and it really changed how I approached my kids after games. I think student-athletes would benefit greatly from more parents participating. The key takeaway I remember is simple: after a game, you say two things "I loved watching you play," and "Did you have fun?" And that's it.

**Stanley Vieira:** I completely agree with that last point. We're on the same page. Tomorrow's training is really a starting point for expanding this work. We haven't previously included parents at this level, so tomorrow will help us gauge interest and turnout and guide how we move forward. Absolutely thank you.

**Member Lippens:** Thank you for the presentation. As a parent of a middle school student, I'm wondering about winter programming. Basketball is great my child participates but are there plans to expand offerings, and what limitations exist?

**Stanley Vieira:**Expansion depends on league decisions and facility availability. Winter programming is limited by space constraints, with gyms booked from after school until late evening. Basketball is currently offered, and options like volleyball have been discussed, but expansion is constrained by facility capacity.

**Member Eldridge:**I appreciate the presentation and focus on athletics and social-emotional well-being. My constituent asks: "How does the athletic department include students with disabilities?"

**Stanley Vieira:**We've introduced Unified Sports at the high school and expanded offerings to ensure all students can participate. We provide non-cut sports, accommodations, and inclusive practices, and no student has been turned away. I'm happy to meet with any parent to discuss their child's specific needs.

**Member Eldridge:** There's a follow-up question about how coaches and programs support and foster an inclusive culture among all participants, especially at younger ages.

**Stanley Vieira:** One key piece is our Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) training, which helps prepare coaches to be inclusive, welcoming, and supportive of all students. We've seen strong value from this training over the past few years. We also provide ongoing professional development through organizations like the Greater Boston League and the MIAA, including webinars and other training opportunities that coaches regularly participate in. It's a continuous focus on building inclusive practices across all programs

**President Davis:** Thank you, Director Vieira. I appreciate the presentation and the work you and your staff do. I strongly support student participation in athletics, and I appreciate the discussion about how we measure success. While win-loss records aren't the primary metric, participation rates are important—and it's encouraging to see growth in many programs. I also share interest in expanding middle school sports, as earlier participation can help sustain engagement at the high school level. Looking at the data, there are notable disparities in participation between boys' and girls' programs. Can you speak to what efforts are being made to increase girls' participation in athletics? I also want to raise girls' hockey specifically. The current situation, where students participate through a co-op and wear another district's jerseys, highlights a gap. While I understand the co-op arrangement is necessary and valuable right now, I believe we should do more to build a stronger in-district pathway for girls' hockey. I know there have been

broader community discussions about expanding opportunities, potentially starting at the youth or middle school level. Are there current efforts or conversations underway in that area, and how can we move toward increasing girls' hockey participation locally?

**Stanley Vieira:** We've been working closely with Somerville Recreation to expand girls' participation in sports at the youth level. We agree more needs to be done earlier—particularly in grades 3–5—to build awareness and interest in athletics, especially given the city's changing demographics and newer families who may not know all the offerings. We've supported clinics, camps, and intramural opportunities to introduce sports at a lower or no cost, including newer sports like lacrosse, in an effort to increase access and participation. Regarding girls' hockey, I've had several meetings on this topic. Most girls who currently play tend to have started very young and often end up in private school programs, which makes building a high school program challenging. We're focused on growing interest at the grassroots level through partnerships with Somerville Hockey, including potential learn-to-skate clinics and introductory programs. We've also explored additional outreach through recreation, such as floor and street hockey initiatives, though participation has been lower than expected. We are continuing these efforts, but building a sustainable girls' hockey program will require growing the pipeline at younger ages over time.

**President Davis:** Quick follow-up full disclosure, I coach several girls from Somerville High School on a fall team, but it's unpaid so there's no financial interest. You mentioned opportunity and building participation. Would having a second ice rink, or improving ice access generally, help support growth in programs like girls' hockey?

**Member Biton:** On a related note, with the success of the U.S. women's Olympic team, I expect we may see increased interest in girls' sports in younger grades and a stronger pipeline over time. Congratulations to Director Vieira the program is clearly moving in a strong direction. The growth in participation reflects real investment, care, and opportunities for students to grow and succeed. I also see athletics as an important way to build student leadership and confidence. I'm curious about the demographics of students participating in athletics. Are there any areas where participation does not reflect the overall student population? If so, what gaps exist, and what supports could help close them?

**Stanley Vieira:** I don't have exact demographic data with me today, but we have a diverse and inclusive student-athlete population. Coaches work to create welcoming environments, get to know students individually, and support both their athletic and personal goals. We also use structures like the Captain's Council to ensure student voice is included. Overall, the focus is on inclusion and positive student experience.

**Member Biton:** Please follow up with the demographic statistics you mentioned.

**Member Green:** We've been consistently focused on access and reducing barriers for all students. That work can't start in high school it has to begin much earlier to build real pathways into athletics. We also need to ensure that participation is meaningful, not just symbolic. Students should have real opportunities to play, contribute, and develop not just be on a roster. If certain programs don't reflect the diversity of our student body, we should ask whether barriers exist and work to remove them. At the same time, we should also respect student choice and ensure we are offering options that align with their interests and backgrounds. I'd like to see demographic data, but also a broader effort to think about a K–12 athletic pipeline where exposure starts in the earliest grades, so that opportunities like college-level athletics feel accessible long before high school.

**Stanley Vieira:** We also work closely with youth organizations in the city like Somerville Youth Soccer, Little League, Babe Ruth, and youth basketball programs. We invite them to games and host youth days to build early connections with our high school programs. It's valuable for younger students to see pathways and imagine themselves participating in the future. We have strong partnerships with community groups, and we see that early exposure as an important part of building long-term engagement in athletics.

**Mayor Wilson:** I'd like to see younger students more engaged at high school games. Sharing schedules with elementary schools could help build interest early and strengthen the pipeline. My question is: what do coaches say would most help their programs?

**Stanley Vieira:** The main need is more facility access. Field space is limited and tightly scheduled, which restricts practice time especially on weekends. Equipment support is strong; space and time are the biggest constraints.

**Member Pitone:** I have a question about intramural sports, which I understand may have shifted from the athletic department to Recreation. I may be mistaken, but I'm curious why that change was made. Intramurals are very accessible, build school spirit, and can serve as a pipeline for example, volleyball growing from intramurals into JV and varsity. How do intramurals fit into the broader athletics strategy, and do we have access to participation data now that it's outside school purview?

**Stanley Vieira:** Intramurals have been run by Somerville Recreation for several years, largely due to their larger staffing capacity and flexibility with facilities when middle school athletics were being developed. They've done a good job organizing the program, with strong participation, especially in soccer, and school staff often involved as coaches. Overall, the structure has worked alongside varsity and middle school athletics.

**Laura Pitone:** This isn't a critique just a question as we think about our overall vision for participation and building pipelines into high school sports. In some ways, it might be helpful to have a unified approach or shared leadership so we can better support students across all programs and ensure continuity. As a school committee member, I'd like to better understand participation and equity in this space and how that aligns with the broader vision, even if the program sits outside the district's direct purview. If needed, a memo or update from the city could be helpful. Intramurals are, from my understanding, one of the most accessible entry points for students, especially beginners, so I'm interested in how we think about that strategically.

**Stanley Vieira:** I agree thank you.

**Laura Pitone:** That's why my question was also directed to the superintendent.

**Mayor Wilson:** I know this is slightly off-topic, but I'm happy to follow up with Member Pitone directly as an intramural coach myself.

**Superintendent Carmona:** Thank you for the question. I'm mindful of time given the upcoming presentations, so I'll follow up in writing. I also want to thank Director Vieira for the report and his work.

- **West Somerville Neighborhood School Improvement Plan**

welcome Principal **Andre Pelletier** from West Somerville Neighborhood School. Andre will share how the school is prioritizing deep engagement with learning tasks and elevating the quality of discourse within that engagement.

These strategies are designed to support stronger growth for all students, and I'm interested to hear how this approach will continue to evolve with the school's School Improvement Plan.

Principal Pelletier shared his school Improvement presentation

## **Comments/ Questions**

**Mayor Wilson:** I appreciate the rethink of back-to-school night and parent-teacher conferences. When I talk to educators, I often hear that the parents who attend are usually the ones who may need it least. Is part of the goal to better engage the families we most need to reach?

**Principal Pelletier:** Our family liaison helps us reach targeted families, and we also try to connect in flexible ways. More broadly, the traditional conference model can feel outdated. I think it works better when we start by asking families what they want to know. At a previous school, we redesigned back-to-school night into workshops based on family feedback, which increased engagement.

**Member Lippens:** I'm always impressed by the amount of work that goes into this. I'm curious whether you've been able to disaggregate the data by demographic or reporting groups, and if so, what that might tell us about student experiences and potential changes we could make.

**Principal Pelletier:** We are able to do that, but one challenge is that not all students completed the conditions-for-learning survey, so we need to be mindful of sample size before drawing conclusions from subgroups. That said, it's important to look at the data that way when possible. I also think our small school community is a strength we can lean on staff and student leadership to better understand student experiences. Our student council, for example, may be well positioned to gather peer feedback through focus groups and help surface insights that adults might miss.

**Member Eldridge:** Thank you for the presentation. Could you provide more information on DIBELS and i-Ready placement scores? The growth data doesn't provide a full picture, so it would be helpful to understand those results as well.

**Principal Pelletier:** I don't have it on hand, but I can share it with you. It's easy to pull from the Open Architects platform, which has been very helpful this year. It allows both administrators and teachers to quickly access DIBELS and i-Ready data to inform instruction and planning, so I can definitely provide that.

**Member Green:** I appreciate the emphasis on every student having a caring adult. From a data perspective, that's one of the strongest predictors of student success. I'm curious about the students who respond "strongly disagree" do we have any profile or shared characteristics that help us understand who those students are compared to the broader population?

**Principal Pelletier:** I don't have that off the top of my head, but it's a really good question.

**Member Biton:** Thank you for the presentation, and thank you to the educators here this evening. There's a lot of strong information in the memo and presentation, but as someone without an education background, I found it a bit dense. It would be helpful to include more narrative context around the data in future memos to make them easier to follow and engage with.

- **East Somerville Community School Improvement Plan**

I'm pleased to introduce our presentation on East Somerville Community School, one of our most diverse schools and home to the Unidos dual-language Spanish-English immersion program. Tonight, Principal Berenice Mace-Diaz will share how the school focuses on small-group and targeted instruction, and the school's efforts to build community and foster a sense of belonging key priorities in their School Improvement Plan.

This presentation offers a window into how East Somerville is supporting both academic growth and social-emotional well-being for all students.

Principal Mace-Diaz share her School Improvement presentation

## **Comments/Questions**

**Member Lippens:** Great presentation. Just to frame i-Ready data: fall is the baseline, winter is a mid-year check, and ideally students should be around 50–60% of their annual growth by that point. When we see 60% or more, that indicates students are on track for their yearly growth. We also look at stretch growth, which measures progress toward closing achievement gaps. With that in mind, this data looks very strong. You've noted work in grades 5 and 6—what is going especially well right now, and from a school committee or budget perspective, how can we best support staff to sustain and build on this progress? support the phenomenal teachers and educators and the work that they're doing so we can continue this trend.

**Principal Mace-Diaz:** If you look at grades 6 and 8 reading data for ML students (WIDA levels 1–2), you'll see strong growth. This success comes from a targeted curriculum paired with strong collaboration between ESL specialists and classroom teachers, allowing students to apply learning directly in class. This model is working well and could be replicated in other grades.

**Member Eldridge:** Thank you for the presentation it was clear, transparent, and much appreciated, especially when the data isn't always where we want it to be. I'm encouraged by the goal of having 70% of students reading at grade level by the end of the 2027 school year. I strongly agree that literacy is foundational to student success. My question is: how can we best support you in reaching that goal?

**Principal Mace-Diaz:** That's a challenging question. The 70% goal is ambitious, and we may need more time, though we are moving in the right direction. To reach it, we likely need more support in the early grades to ensure students are reading at grade level sooner, as well as additional interventionists to support struggling readers. We're seeing success with current strategies, especially targeted support and collaboration, so the focus is on expanding and replicating those approaches across more grade levels.

**Member Eldridge:** Quick follow-up, early intervention seems critical. If students fall multiple grade levels behind, even strong growth still requires years to close the gap. So, providing support earlier could prevent those larger gaps from forming. Is that correct?

**Principal Mace-Diaz:** Yes, that's correct. Early intervention is key. While tools like i-Ready and at-home access can help students catch up, it's much easier if supports are in place earlier. Our educators are working hard and showing strong growth, but when students reach eighth grade already behind, it becomes much more difficult to close those gaps before high school.

**Member Green:** Building on Member Eldridge's questions, I want to start by highlighting the real progress we're seeing both in absolute terms and compared to where the school was several years ago, particularly for multilingual learners. Looking ahead, while expanding dual language programs across schools is a larger conversation, what lessons can we learn from your success? What do you think is driving the growth in access scores, and what can other schools take from that?

**Principal Mace-Diaz:** So, you're asking what we're doing well as a school in terms of access score growth?

**Member Green:** I'm asking about English language attainment what can we learn from your success and apply to other schools?

**Principal Mace-Diaz:** A big factor is the school's commitment and belief that all students can succeed. Our staff shares a strong mindset that students are capable, and they work collaboratively to support that growth. In addition, high-quality curriculum and training have made a significant difference. New curriculum in grades 4–8 and the use of ARC in the Unidos program have provided strong instructional tools. Combined with effective teaching and

collaboration, these elements are driving the growth we're seeing.

**Superintendent Carmona:** In terms of lessons learned, dual language and bilingual education are based on the idea that a student's primary language is an asset. Building on that foundation supports cognitive development and learning a strength-based approach. While this theory has long been discussed, seeing it work in practice in our district reinforces that it is effective. However, success also depends on key supports, including high-quality instructional materials, strong collaboration among educators, and adequate resources. This is a process that will continue to build over time, with the goal of improving outcomes and reducing disparities. Expanding dual language programs is a separate conversation, but these results show what is possible.

**Member Green:** My second question is more for the district and relates to early learning gaps. Before the pandemic, the district made significant efforts to close the kindergarten readiness gap, recognizing that many low-income students enter school already behind. While progress was being made, those efforts were disrupted by the pandemic. As we return to more typical conditions, I would appreciate an update on where that work stands. Narrowing gaps early makes it much easier for students to keep up, rather than having to catch up later.

**Principal Mace-Diaz:** We are working on early literacy, particularly in grades K–2. This year, we held a literacy night and, through donors, were able to provide a book to each attending student. Looking ahead, we hope to expand this by hosting two literacy nights one in the fall and one in the spring and provide books for all K–2 students. The goal is to involve families through workshops and shared reading activities to strengthen early literacy at home and school.

**Dr. Boston Davis:** Thank you for the presentation. To briefly add, one key factor is the importance of high-quality, research-based instructional materials, especially in early grades. Currently, aside from ARC, these are not yet fully in place across K–2, but they are planned for implementation next year. We've been rolling out initiatives in phases for example, Illustrative Mathematics this year so that staff aren't overwhelmed. Strengthening core instruction with strong materials and structured literacy practices is essential to improving outcomes early and preventing gaps from widening over time.

## V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

### A. MSBA- Space Summary and Educational Program

**Superintendent Carmona** Thank you I'm very grateful for the patience and work of the Perkins Eastman team. We're now shifting from discussion of performance and improvement to the MSBA process, focusing on the vision for the new facility. Perkins Eastman has led this work, engaging the community and gathering feedback that has helped shape a clear and consistent vision. Tonight, the team will present the proposed designs and highlight key themes that have emerged from that community input. Welcome, and thank you again for your work.

Lisa Pakora project manager for the 115 Sycamore Street new building project and Robert Bell, educational planner and programmer both with Perkins Eastman share the Space Summary and Educational Program presentation

### Comments/Questions

**Superintendent Carmona:** Thank you for the comprehensive update. I want to highlight a few key points that have emerged from the ELT and community visioning sessions. First, there is a strong focus on creating a sense of smallness and community within a larger school. This is being addressed by organizing the building into smaller "neighborhoods" or grade-level groupings, including early childhood spaces, to provide a more personalized, developmentally appropriate experience. Second, the design incorporates flexibility to adapt to changing needs over time. Third, we are exploring ways to integrate innovative programming, building on the Winter Hill model,

including expanded STEM, engineering, and theater opportunities to strengthen the middle grades experience. The planning document is still being refined but is nearing completion. A first reading is scheduled for Monday, with a second on the 16th. Thank you to the School Committee for the time and support in this process.

**Chair Dr. Ackman:** **Chair Dr. Ackman:** To reiterate, the educational program will be presented and discussed at a special virtual meeting next week on the 9th, followed by an in-person discussion in chambers two weeks from tonight as part of the regular meeting.

**Mayor Wilson:** I want to acknowledge that when I announced in January that the School Committee would be involved in this decision, it was a significant shift. I appreciate the work of our Chair in quickly engaging with this process as it became clear the timeline would move to March. I also want to thank the district administration for rapidly developing the educational program, and the project team for preparing tonight's presentation on a tight timeline. It's important that this elected body has a voice in decisions like this, and I appreciate everyone's efforts to make that possible.

**Member Biton:** Thank you, Mr. Mayor, for involving the School Committee I think this is exactly where we need to be. I also want to thank the administration for their hard work on the educational programming plan. I know it's a significant amount of work, and I appreciate the care and effort going into getting it right. Thank you as well to the Perkins Eastman team for being here late and for the presentation, which helps us better understand the schools we're designing and the care that goes into our district's work. That's why we're here on a Monday night. My question relates to the numbers in the presentation specifically the 925 and 690 student seat options. You noted that in both scenarios we are slightly above a threshold that would require additional space for shared resources like gyms. Is there flexibility in the seating numbers that could help optimize space and avoid potentially inefficient investment in those facilities? For example, if the capacity were slightly reduced, would that allow for a more efficient allocation of resources, or are we fixed to those two options?

**Robert Bell:** **Robert Bell:** Yes, you are locked into those particular numbers as part of the agreement with MSBA. But you have flexibility in other ways. So, when we talk about tipping into needing two, if doing so would lead to low utilization, we can be creative about what those spaces are. Something in the STEAM variety, an art room and a flex room. Another way to be flexible is in how it's scheduled. These are some of the exact conversations happening with the educational leadership and educational program to consider such things.

**President Davis:** Thank you for the presentation. There's a lot to take in. I was reviewing the spreadsheet and a few things stood out that I want to better understand, especially when comparing the two options. While the difference in class sections makes sense, it appears many support spaces stay largely the same even as enrollment increases. That raises some concerns about capacity and programming. In particular, counselor spaces remain the same despite serving several hundred more students, which I'd like to understand better. I also noticed art and music spaces don't increase and appear to fall below MSBA recommendations in the higher-enrollment option. That stood out to me and I need clarification on how that will work in practice. To be clear, I'm not supportive of the larger building option, but if we go in that direction, I want to understand how we ensure we're not limiting access to core enrichment areas like art and music, where Somerville has historically been strong.

**Robert Bell:** I'll start with the last point. The MSBA calculations assume a 30-period cycle, with students attending programs twice per week rather than once per week. They also include art, music, and technology, but they do not include theater as part of their standard model. So overall, their assumptions about scheduling and participation are different from how our program is structured and delivered.

**President Davis:** Just a quick clarification on that, because this might actually be helpful to understand. So are you saying the MSBA calculation groups art, music, and theater together into a single allocation? And then in our model, we effectively treat them separately so instead of one combined allocation, we're looking at something like

two sections of art, two of music, and two of theater, rather than a single shared number? Am I understanding that correctly?

**Robert Bell:** Yes, it's a different participation model. The reason you sometimes see the same number of spaces in both the 690 and 925 scenarios is that at 690 you just reach the threshold of needing a second space, while at 925 you are still able to use the space at a high level of utilization. That's also where flexibility in multi-purpose spaces can improve efficiency. Some programs, like the central kitchen, remain the same in both options because they are designed to serve multiple schools, so they don't scale directly with enrollment. For special education, based on what we understand, most of the programming is coming from the current Winter Hill program, so there isn't a significant change in those needs even with combined enrollment. That may seem counterintuitive, but this is still an early iteration. For guidance counselors, that's an area we are still refining. We may also be double-counting some roles between special education supports and general administration, and that is still being resolved.

**President Davis:** Thank you for that, I appreciate it. I do want to make one brief comment of caution. I would be careful about any assumptions that the Brown School population will simply move into this school, because we heard in public comment tonight that that is not necessarily the case. So I would not rely on that in the analysis.

**Chair Dr. Ackman:** Thank you, everyone. We'll discuss the educational program one week from tonight and hopefully vote in two weeks, on the 16th, with the option to extend by a week if needed given the volume of material. After the March vote, we'll also need to work with the city and Perkins Eastman to address a separate timeline issue. They are requesting feedback by August 27th and a vote around August 17th, which falls during a period when we are typically not in session. We'll need to plan accordingly.

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

### **B. Personnel Report**

- February 2026

During February we had one retirement come through and that is for Will Verbits our Special Education Department Coordinator for the Kennedy School. Will has been in the district for 5 years but has many years of experience in the special Education Field

Unfortunately, we lost Katherine Viera, our payroll coordinator as of 2/20/26 and we will be losing Gladys Valle, our MLE Assistant Director at the end of the school year.

We also have 2 staff members who will be filling in leaves:

Paraprofessional Nick Triant will be filling as Dean of Students at the Healey School

OST Assistant Site Director Alexander Walters will be filling as OST Site Director

#### **We have hired:**

a new Technology Specialist/Trainer Claire Messier

a Special Education Paraprofessional Wayne Gethers

more substitute teachers and

more lunch attendants.

Summer School postings have been posted and the hiring season has started; we have also posted some positions due to resignations and retirements for the 2026-2027 school year.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. SY26 Somerville High School Diploma Request:** (Recommended action: approval)

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Member Biton, seconded by Member Lippens, to approve the SY26 Somerville High School Diploma Request for David Didier.

The motion was approved unanimously via roll call vote.

#### **B. SY26-27 School Committee Meetings Schedule**

**Chair Dr. Ackman-** proposed meeting schedule for next school year. Please review it, provide feedback, and compare it against your calendars. We've already received some initial feedback, and more is welcome.

### **VIII. COMMUNITY OR CALENDAR ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**Member Biton:** I just want to share that I will be holding joint office hours with Ward 7 Councilor Emily Hart on Saturday, March 14th from 10 to noon at the North Street Stefan building. I encourage residents to come by and share any concerns. Thank you.

**Member Pitone:** I also have office hours on March 14th from 10 a.m. to noon at Zaruma Gold Coffee on Woodbine Street, along with Senator Pat Jehlen and Ward 5 City Councilor Naima Sait. Please join us.

**Mayor Wilson:** I will also be attending the Ward 5 office hours. Thank you.

**Superintendent Carmona:** Just a quick reminder that tomorrow evening at Somerville High School, we will be joining the city and Perkins Eastman to host a community forum on the new building project. It begins at 6 p.m. This is an opportunity for the Somerville community to learn more about the project, provide feedback, and ask questions to the panel, including myself and Mayor Wilson. Everyone is welcome.

### **IX. CONDOLENCES**

No Condolences.

### **X. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:28 p.m.

#### **Related documents:**

Agenda

[Athletics Department](#)

[West Somerville Neighborhood School Improvement Plan](#)

[East Somerville Community School Improvement Plan](#)

Personnel Report

[Space Summary and Educational Program Presentation](#)

Submitted by: G. Silveira/ E. Garcia

**Attach Documents Starting on the next page**

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
**CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – CITY HALL**  
**REGULAR MEETING – MARCH 2, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.**

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2026, 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:  
[somerillema.gov/GovTVLive](https://somerillema.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\\_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg)

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. PUBLIC COMMENT – In person**

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

[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zg)

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SPSSC25

**IV. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT****A. District Report**

- Athletics Department
- West Somerville Neighborhood School Improvement Plan
- East Somerville Community Schools Improvement Plan

**B. Personnel Report**

- February 2026

**V. UNFINISHED BUSINESS****A. MSBA- Space Summary and Educational Program****VI. NEW BUSINESS****A. SY26 Somerville High School Diploma Request: (Recommended action: approval)**

*David Didier Somerville, MA*

**B. SY26-27 School Committee Meetings Schedule****VII. COMMUNITY OR CALENDAR ITEMS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS****VIII. CONDOLENCE****IX. ADJOURNMENT****For Simultaneous Interpretation in Spanish, Portuguese and Haitian Creole See below:****Español - Para Interpretación**

Para **ver** la reunión regular del Comité Escolar el 2 de marzo 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 simultaneo 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\\_u8Awy93fR60hvC37Xib1zq](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR60hvC37Xib1zq)

ID de la reunion: 810 5048 0087

Contraseña: SPSSC25

**Português - Para Interpretação**

Para **assistir** à Reunião Regular do Comitê Escolar 2 de março às 19h, ao vivo de casa, visite o seguinte link e seleccione 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\\_u8Awy93fR60hvC37Xib1zq](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR60hvC37Xib1zq)

Meeting ID: 810 5048 0087

Password: SPSSC25

**Kreyòl ayisyen - Pou entèpretasyon**

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

Pou **gade** reyinyon regilye Komite Lekòl la, 2 mas 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 similtanè Reyinyon Regilye a an panyòl, pòtigè oswa kreyòl ayisyen, ou dwe enskri 48 èdtan davans epi endike lanq ou prefere a. Pou enskri, klike sou lyen ki anba a:  
[https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zq](https://k12somerville.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_u8Awy93fR6OhvC37Xib1zq)  
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Somerville Public Schools  
Education • Inspiration • Excellence  
February 2026

RESIGNATION FOR PURPOSE OF RETIREMENT:				
SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	SERVICE YEARS
SHS	English Teacher	Lisa Brewster-Cook	07/23/25	26 years
SHS/CTE	Cosmetology Instructor	Gregory Wright	09/13/25	21 years
WSNS	Grade 1 Teacher	Jane Gardner	06/30/26	27 years
Central/Finance	Principal Account Clerk	Mary Kelley	08/29/25	36 years
DW	School Nurse	Lynne Chamallas	08/23/25	21 years
SCALE	SCALE Teacher	Nancy Egan-Tricomi	07/15/25	34 years
SHS	Assistant Principal	Marie Foreman	06/30/26	27 years
CAP	Occupational Therapist	Andrea Pease	04/03/26	30 years
SPED	Academic Evaluator	Sharon Levesque	06/30/26	28 years
CAP	Special Education Teacher	Jacquelyn Lawrence	06/30/26	38 years
CAP	PreK Paraprofessional	Jerri Fullerton	01/02/26	27 years
Central	Director of Student Services	Elizabeth Doncaster	06/30/26	23 years
KEN	Kindergarten Teacher	Roxane Scrima	06/30/26	35 years
SHS	Assistant Principal, Elm Community	Joel Villegas	06/30/26	4 years
DW	Occupational Therapist	Maureen Corso	06/30/26	35 years
WHCIS	Head Clerk 1	Nancy McWeeny	06/30/26	27 years
Central/SFLC	Director of Basic Needs and Housing Support Services	Regina Bertholdo	07/22/26	27 years
SPED	Special Education Department Coordinator	William Verbits	06/30/26	5 years
RESIGNATION NOTICES:				
SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	COMMENTS
Central/Payroll	Payroll Coordinator	Katherine Vieira	02/20/26 - Revised	
Central/MLE	Assistant Director of MLE Programs	Gladys Valle	06/30/26	
SHS	Door & Building Monitor	Jasmine Bell	01/30/26	
WHCIS	.50 Spanish Teacher	Kimberly Kaufman	01/16/26	
ASSIGNMENT ENDED:				
SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATE	
LEAVES OF ABSENCES:				
SCHOOL	POSITION	INCUMBENT	EFFECTIVE DATES	
AFAS	ELA Teacher	Caitlin Holmquist	11/26/25-01/02/26 - Revised	
CAP	SPED AIM Paraprofessional	Lillian Kelley	01/22/26-02/06/26	
Central/MLE	Assistant Director of MLE Programs	Gladys Valle	12/08/25-01/16/26 - Revised	
ESCS	Paraprofessional	Bonilla Felicita	01/14/26-02/13/26	

HLY	Dean of Students	Samphel Bayul	02/02/26-05/11/26 - Revised		
HLY	Speech & Language Pathologist	Melissa Warren	09/15/25-06/16/26 - Revised		
HLY	School Nurse	Kaitlyn Newman	01/05/26-01/20/26 - Revised		
HLY	Grades 5-8 Math Teacher	Sabrina Soriano	01/02/26-06/16/26 - Revised		
KEN	PK-2 Teacher	Roxane Scrima	01/02/26-04/02/26		
KEN	SKIP Teacher	Laura Valenstein	02/05/26-03/05/26		
KEN	English Teacher	Ren Ward	12/22/25-03/13/26		
KEN	Grade 1 Teacher	Melissa Matteis	10/20/25-06/16/26 - Revised		
KEN/CS	FT Lead Teacher	Laura Modahl	12/19/25-02/20/26		
SCALE	PT SCALE Teacher	Hilary Sallick	01/15/26-04/22/26		
WHCIS	SPED Paraprofessional	Jillian Lerner	01/29/26-03/23/26		
WHCIS	School Adjustment Counselor	Alexandra Scheman	12/15/25-02/28/26 - Revised		
WHCIS	Grade 5 Teacher	Amanda Bell	04/28/26-06/16/26		
WHCIS	Speech & Language Pathologist	Katherine Margulis	12/08/25-01/16/26 - Revised		
WHCIS	Grade 3 Teacher	Holly Robert	09/25/26-06/16/26 - Revised		
WSNS	Math/Science Teacher	Lorin Federico	11/21/25-03/09/26 - Revised		
INTRA-DISTRICT:					
<b>SCHOOL</b>					
<b>POSITION</b>					
<b>INCUMBENT</b>					
<b>REASON</b>					
<b>VICE</b>					
<b>EFFECTIVE</b>					
AFAS/CS	FT Lead Teacher	Eman Shoukat	New Assignment	Yesenia Reales	02/02/26
DW	Intermittent Substitute Teacher	Gabriella Miranda	Additional Assignment	NA	02/04/26
ESCS/FS	FT Cafeteria Helper	Gail Arensbach	PT to FT status	NA	01/20/26
ESCS/FS	FT Cafeteria Helper	David Moulton	New Assignment	NA	01/20/26
ESCS/FS	FT Cafeteria Helper	Jessica Fernandes	PT to FT status	NA	01/20/26
HLY	SPED Paraprofessional	Jennalyn Pflieger	Temporary New Assignment	Priya Plein	01/05/26
HLY	MLE Paraprofessional	Jennalyn Pflieger	Temporary New Assignment	Nicholas Triant	02/14/26
HLY	Dean of Students	Nicholas Triant	Temporary New Assignment	Samphel Bayul	02/02/26
OST/HLY	OST Site Director	Alexander Walters	Temporary New Assignment	Amanda Oppman	02/02/26
WHCIS/FS	FT Cafeteria Helper	Bertha Sanchez	PT to FT status	NA	02/09/26
NEW HIRES:					
<b>SCHOOL</b>					
<b>POSITION</b>					
<b>INCUMBENT</b>					
<b>VICE</b>					
<b>DUAL/SEI</b>					
<b>EFFECTIVE</b>					
AFAS/CS	FT Lead Teacher	Zaita Antonio	Ana Cortez	No/No	02/02/26
DW	Intermittent Substitute Teacher	Joran Dade	NA	No/No	02/04/26
DW	Intermittent Substitute Teacher	John Cho	NA	No/No	02/06/26
DW	Intermittent Substitute Teacher	Morgan O'Connor	NA	No/No	02/06/26
DW	Intermittent Substitute Teacher	Sarah Kate Burdick	NA	No/No	02/05/26
DW	Intermittent Substitute Teacher	Olivia Gilligan-Corsetti	NA	No/No	02/02/26
DW	Intermittent Lunch Attendant	Dulce Lazo	NA	No/No	02/09/26
DW	Intermittent Lunch Attendant	Joseph Goodrich	NA	No/No	02/09/26
DW	Intermittent Lunch Attendant	Karima Moujahid	NA	No/No	02/09/26
DW	Technology Specialist/Trainer	Claire Messier	Arbens Lesy	No/No	02/17/26
ESCS	PT Library Utility Aide	Jestenia Southerland	Kim Aguirre	No/No	02/02/26
KEN/CS	FT Lead Teacher	Eleanor Scoville	Kelly Lopez	No/No	02/02/26
SCALE	PT Reading/Writing 2 Teacher - Mornings	Marion Paniagua	Hilary Sallick	No/No	02/09/26
SHS	SPED Paraprofessional	Wayne Gethers	Isaac Wilde	No/No	02/09/26