



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS MAYOR JAKE WILSON

To: Somerville School Committee
From: Amanda Nagim-Williams, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Mayor's Office
CC: Mayor Jake Wilson
Eric Weisman, Commissioner of Department of Public Works
Richard Raiche, Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management
Steven Nutter, Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment
Brad Rawson, Director of Mobility
Date: June 8, 2026
RE: SEU Bi-annual Updates

School Committee will provide the SEU with bi-annual updates on progress on:

1. Partnership with the City to maintain safe and healthy teaching and learning environments within school buildings and school grounds

The City of Somerville and Somerville Public Schools (SPS) partner closely to maintain safe and healthy teaching and learning environments. We are deeply committed to responding to the building and grounds needs of all SPS schools. SPS and the City will continue to partner on the goal of eliminating non-academic barriers that negatively impact teaching and learning. Below is a non-exhaustive list of recent examples of efforts that directly impact school buildings and grounds.

- i. In October 2022, SPS was awarded a \$700,000 Improving Ventilation and Air Quality (IVAQ) Grant from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The goal of this grant funding is to improve ventilation and air quality in school districts with students and communities disproportionately impacted by the COVID pandemic. SPS projects included replacing various cooling and heating equipment at the Healey, Brown, West, and Kennedy schools. The IVAQ grant was extended through December 2024 and all projects have been completed apart from ESCS multiple door replacements in food service area and the Argenziano food service exterior door replacement. Our DPW team still plans to complete this work.
- ii. DPW is currently working with the SPS to develop an internal process for intake and investigation of Air Quality concerns and complaints from staff and students.

a. Resiliency

- i. Community resiliency work in progress includes:
 - a. Regional project with the Resilient Mystic Collaborative to conduct a preliminary study of a regional network of resilient community centers in Somerville, Cambridge, Medford, Everett, Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop. This project will wrap up in June 2026 with initial recommendations for a regional network.
 - b. Community heat resilience project with the Barr Foundation, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Cambridge Health Alliance, and CultureHouse to implement a pilot heat resilience program in Summer 2026. The pilot program will be implemented in summer 2026 in East Somerville. The program includes A/C distribution to eligible households through the Cambridge Health Alliance, cooling pop-ups with community organizations, and identifying opportunities to depave and vegetate properties.
- ii. Infrastructure resiliency work in progress includes:
 - a. IAM – Engineering continues its annual pipeline rehabilitation program and has started including the installation of Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) basins wherever feasible. GSI provides natural attenuation of stormwater, removes pollutants, and reduces heat island effects in our roadways.
 - b. IAM - Capital Projects released the construction bid package for the Healey School to renovate room 208 into 5 individual educational support spaces. The bid package also includes acoustical treatments for the cafeteria space. This work is scheduled for Summer 2026.
 - c. IAM – Capital Projects is finalizing bid documents for the full replacement of the ballasted roof at the West Somerville Neighborhood School to meet new energy codes and be solar ready. This work is tentatively scheduled for Summer/Fall of 2026.
 - d. IAM-Capital Projects is working closely with the DPW to review design options for upgrading the boiler system at Argenziano.
 - e. IAM – Capital Projects is working with a design consultant to review cost projections for utilizing the existing Cummings School for potential office space in the Prescott Street wing and swing space in both the Prescott and School Street wings.

b. Climate Forward

- i. In Spring 2024, the City updated Climate Forward, a community climate action plan with a roadmap for achieving interim goals. Climate Forward

proposes a 50% reduction in emissions in municipal and school buildings by 2030.

- ii. As of April 2024, the City of Somerville has committed that all new schools will be net-zero and we continue to work towards this goal.
- iii. Decarbonization studies are underway or completed for all the schools and IAM/OSE will be following up with specific investigations of promising Energy Efficiency/Decarbonization efforts. (More detailed information in Section 2).
- iv. In early 2025, the City Council unanimously approved an amendment to the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change establishing ordinance. The Commission has modernized into the Climate Action Commission (CAC) which is currently interim. This year, the CAC will recruit 13 members, including at least two youth members. A member of Somerville Public Schools Administration has also been designated to serve as an ex-officio member. Efforts are underway to have new commission members appointed before Fall 2026.
- v. In Spring 2025, the City worked with SPS to pilot afterschool Climate Action Clubs at three schools – Argenziano, East Somerville, and Winter Hill Schools. The City and SPS expanded the Climate Action Clubs in Spring 2026 to five schools: Healey, East Somerville, Winter Hill, Argenziano, and Kennedy. The Climate Action Club program was developed in coordination with the SEU representatives developing the district-wide climate change curriculum. The 2026 Climate Action Clubs hired 13 SHS students to lead the program and provide workforce exposure to the high school students. The 2025 program hired nine high school students.
- vi. In 2025, the City was recognized as a member of the inaugural class of communities designated as Climate Leaders by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Through this program, the City was awarded technical assistance to create an overview of the path to decarbonizing all municipal assets, including school buildings.
- vii. In Spring 2026, the City won a Bloomberg Youth Climate Action Fund grant to fund a microgrant program to support youth-led climate solution initiatives that advance Climate Forward, the City’s community climate action plan. The microgrant program will be released in Fall 2026 and leverage the existing climate work SPS and the City have partnered on, including the Climate Club’s integration into SPS’s Community Design Lab.
- viii. In June 2026, OSE will complete the seventh cohort of the popular Climate Ambassadors program, open to residents aged 16 and older.
- ix. The City facilitated the fourth summer of Mayor’s Climate Justice Youth Summer Jobs program in 2025, hosting a student to analyze electric vehicle

charging station use patterns and recommend changes. The City will facilitate the fifth summer of this program in 2026.

- x. The City hosted its seventh SustainaVille Week in May 2026, the City's annual climate change week.

c. Efficient Systems and Work Order Processes

- i. SPS leadership continues to partner with the City to improve the current work order process for addressing and tracking facility needs.
- ii. The Administration will continue to meet regularly with SPS to discuss, prioritize and plan for SPS building needs.
- iii. Looking to the future, following an extensive procurement process in 2025, IAM has executed a contract with OpenGov for a full Asset Management and Work Order system. The software integration process is underway.

d. Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA)

- i. The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) has specific requirements for the way school districts identify, manage, document, and inspect asbestos-containing materials (ACM). While AHERA is a reporting requirement for school districts, within Somerville, DPW is the designated department for the AHERA management plan and compliance.
- ii. DPW staff completed the AHERA Awareness Training on December 28, 2023. Follow up discussions with the designee were held in Summer 2024 and 2025. Another full-scale AHERA training is being scheduled for Summer 2026.
- iii. An electronic copy of the Asbestos Management Plan and three-year inspection plan for each school building has been shared with SPS Administration. DPW is currently working with a new AHERA vendor to provide a new 3 Year Inspection Report by the end of September 2026.

e. Snow Removal

- i. During the winter months, SPS and the City share a high priority of keeping students and families safe on their way to and from school. The Department of Public Works and other relevant departments prioritize the following during any snow event:
 - a. First priority: school entrances, drop-off areas, staircases and walkways
 - b. Second priority: school crossings
- ii. Staff use several methods of de-icing and removal depending on the surface. These include pretreating with plant-safe ice melt or salt, and removing snow with shovels, snow blowers, brooms and squeegees.

- iii. In addition, the City continues its pilot of Sidewalk Snow Clearing on Broadway and School Streets. On these two routes, Inspectional Services staff ticket property owners who do not remove snow from their sidewalks after an allotted amount of time. City workers then clear snow to promote pedestrian safety.
- iv. To improve safe passage for WHCIS students, DPW works proactively with DCR, advocating that the Otis street bridge is clear of ice and snow.
- v. Snow removal on granular rubberized surface (i.e. poured -in-place) is not performed due to potential damage caused when removing snow. Manufacturers and installers of this product all recommend against snow removal or any activities other than foot traffic on these surfaces due to damage digging, abrasion, and friction can cause to the rubber resulting in exposure of the underlayment. The poured-in-place is designed with ground rubber granules and glue as a binder. This material forms a flexible surface providing give under foot or fall protection in parks and playgrounds. If a shovel or plow were to be used on this surface, the rubber granules can be dislodged. DPW observed this damage on the bike path in past years and has since ceased snow removal on these surfaces.
- vi. This summer the DPW will meet with SPS and School Administration staff to identify areas and phases for post-storm snow removal. These meetings will result in maps for each school.

2. Partnership with the City to become carbon net-negative

As various building systems require replacement, the City will be identifying and installing new technologies that reduce each building's carbon load, improve resiliency and energy efficiency. Active projects advancing those goals include:

- a. **Fleet:** The City is scheduled to roll out an updated vehicle purchase policy in 2026 to comply with the requirements of state programs and encourage purchase of energy-efficient vehicles across the fleet. In 2025, the City installed one new EV charging station. In 2026, the City will install 12 new charging stations, 11 of which will be paid for with grant funding. All station locations are aligned with the interdepartmental siting strategy published in 2024.

3. Partnership with the City to increase parking availability for staff around school buildings - particularly those without a dedicated lot and a large staff - and to reduce parking demand by incentivizing alternate modes of transportation.

The City continues to prioritize schools in its transportation policy, projects and programs, especially around traffic safety to reduce crashes and transit priority to incentivize alternate modes of transportation. In 2026, the City continued construction of a major walkability and

traffic calming reconstruction project on Tufts Street adjacent to the Capuano Early Childhood Education Center. At the City's request, MassDOT is constructing major pedestrian safety upgrades at the intersection of McGrath Highway and Broadway, which will improve safety and mobility for several of our school communities including the Healey, the East, the Winter Hill at Edgerly and the Capuano. Also in 2026, the City partnered with the MBTA to establish a new "Route 85" bus service that provides our first-ever direct connections between Assembly Square, East Somerville, and Union Square. The City continues to provide free parking passes, free transit passes and free bikeshare memberships to SPS staff. The City also continues to provide free transit passes to SPS students in grades 7-12 to improve travel choice and reduce traffic and parking demand.