

February 11, 2002

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Dennis M. Sullivan called a Long Range Planning Committee of the Whole Meeting of the School Committee to order in the auditorium of the East Somerville Community School at 7:10 p.m., to conduct a general meeting to discuss Future School Space Issues.

**II. ROLL CALL**

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

Mayor Gay was absent.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano, Superintendent of Schools, was present along with approximately 72 members of the audience.

**III. FUTURE SCHOOL SPACE ISSUES RE: CHOICE PROGRAM, UNIDOS PROGRAM AND POWDER HOUSE COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Chairman Sullivan opened the meeting, welcomed everyone present and introduced the members of the school committee to the audience. Mr. Sullivan advised that the first part of this evening's meeting would be for community input and asked those who would like to speak to sign up.

(A.) The following people addressed the school committee regarding the CHOICE Program:

- |                                      |                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Mr. Mark K. Mondol                   | Mr. Stan Eichner                      |
| Mr. Paul Bolkelman, Council Co-Chair | Ms. Susan Goldstein                   |
| Ms. Betty Ann Vitale                 | Ms. Kirsten Russell, Council Co-Chair |

Mr. Bolkelman advised that the Choice Program's vision is seeking two-strands, K-8, at a unified location that provides diversity under an educated leadership.

(B.) The following person addressed the school committee regarding UNIDOS, the two-way bilingual program:

Ms. Kelly Demers, a grade 6 teacher at the ESCS and a parent of a child in the UNIDOS program.

(C.) The following persons addressed the school committee regarding the PHCS:

- Ms. Cheryl Ann Welch, ESL teacher at the PHCS, Grades 7-8
- Ms. Carol Lewis

Chairman Sullivan thanked the members of the audience who spoke and the school committee. He then invited the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Albert F. Argenziano, to address the meeting. Dr. Argenziano said that whatever comes forward tonight there has been a tremendous amount of research, consultation and soul-searching with almost 30 hours of discussion.

## Monday, February 11, 2002 – Long Range Planning Committee of the Whole Meeting

Dr. Argenziano passed out and spoke on the following packet of information he gave to the audience regarding future space considerations given to the Somerville School Committee:

### **Preface:**

School Facilities serve many essential functions for students in the educational process. From a practical sense the primary purpose of a school is for learning, but it also becomes a social setting when it services children of the public at large and it becomes a healthful living environment for children.

Learning may be defined in many ways from a minimum concern with the 3R's or it can include the essential requirements for a modern technological society which broadens the scope of learning to science, occupations, art, music, health, physical education, library research as well as bilingual and special education.

Concerns for the social setting can extend from uncrowded classroom space to an adequate and aesthetically pleasing variety of function space for study, work, dining and social interchange of ideas. A healthful environment requires a sanitation system of water, sewerage, fresh air, good lighting and maintained thermal control.

Since 1994, The Somerville Public Schools have earnestly set out an agenda for improvement of our facilities. Presently, buildings completed or planned are:

- Ward 7 - West Somerville Neighborhood School
- Ward 5/6 - John F. Kennedy School
- Ward 4 - Arthur D. Healey School
- Ward 1 - Edgerly Early Learning Center
- Ward 2 - Lincoln Park Community School
- Ward 3 - Somerville High School/Cummings School

Upgrades are needed at the:

- Winter Hill Community School
- East Somerville Community School
- Powder House Community School
- Brown School

Through capital improvement projects, the above facilities will be upgraded and improved beyond roofs, windows, and painting already completed.

### A) Two Way Bilingual Program

The entire adequacy of school buildings, in a sense, represents the purpose of the entire appraisal process. This is true because schools exist primarily to serve the educational needs of the community and school district. The determination of how adequate a facility is, in the final analysis, must be derived from the relationships between educational programs and physical structure. Individual behavior results in part from the environment. The environment provided by the school building will deter or enhance the instructional program.

**Monday, February 11, 2002 – Long Range Planning Committee of the Whole Meeting**

Needs:

- 1) Library/Media Center – Somerville Public Schools accommodate media in the same area with library materials, thus creating an instructional materials center. Accreditation standards usually refer very specifically to this portion of the school with an emphasis on available seating and work space for 10% of the student body.
- 2) Science program – This is an important instructional area. Classroom space and laboratory space should be provided. Lab spaces are needed for small groups of students (3 or 4). Teacher preparation space is essential.
- 3) Music/Art Space – Music programs are part of every grade level. Partial acoustical treatment of walls and ceilings is necessary for quality instruction and also to avoid transmission of sound to other areas of the building. The space for art should accommodate either individual or small group table space.
- 4) Technology Education – Technology encompasses are total program. A computer laboratory is a must for this school.

Recommendation: #1

The present Edgerly Education Center will become the space for our Two Way Bilingual Program. For the 2003-04 school year, this space will become an additional building, with a full-time principal and monies will be provided to enhance spaces listed above under 1, 2, 3, 4.

Capital improvement funding needs to handle the above as follows:

Library Media Center	\$125,000.
Science Program	\$125,000.
Music/Art Area	\$ 75,000.
Technology Area	\$100,000.
Total:	\$425,000.

The Somerville School Committee will have a two year financial window to handle the above fiscal needs.

- B) Recommendation #2  
At the end of our present lease on the St. Polycarp site, we terminate the lease. After five (5) years, the cost to upgrade the Edgerly will be negligible.
- C) Recommendation #3  
Shore Collaborative wishes to continue their lease of the Conwell School for the 2002-03 school year. Recommendation to continue lease for one more year, while research and preparation of Project Prevention nears completion. Program will begin, pending funding, in 2003-04 school year.
- D) Choice Program  
A comparison of projected student enrollments and student capacity of our elementary school facilities based on our educational programs show a consistent migration pattern away from the Brown School area. The capacity of the Brown School can easily handle 300-320 students. Present population, without the Choice K is at 200 students. The Brown School has traditionally scored first or second on any tests whether local, state, or packaged. It has a strong principal with a dedicated professional staff. It is imperative that we keep this building open, vibrant and with aesthetic improvements will continue to be a beacon of learning.  
N.B. (Capital Improvement needed \$200,000.00)

**Monday, February 11, 2002 – Long Range Planning Committee of the Whole Meeting**

- E) Recommendation #4  
We continue a second strand of the Choice Program through 2002-03 at the Brown School. This allows additional research of our demographic needs as well as changing migration patterns in the city. We also revisit this recommendation in the spring of 2003.
  
- F) Recommendation #5 (If accepted, recommendation #2 is not on the table)  
For the 2003-04 school year the Choice Program has K, 1, 2, 3 (2 sections of each) at St. Polycarps and 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 (2 sections of each) at the Healey School. This maintains present quality control of the program and allows existing leadership to be maintained. Director of Alternative Programs is housed at St. Polycarps and functions as Site Based Manager of Programs in absence of the Principal and Vice Principal.

Summary:

People taking part in a comprehensive school facility appraisal often say they will never again look at a school building in the same way they did prior to that experience. Features or conditions often previously overlooked become readily apparent.

The Somerville School Committee should be quite proud of its aggressive vote and stance on improving and upgrading their school facilities, which also serve as an impetus toward improving the instructional program. We are halfway toward our climb and need the patience, resources and financial commitment to make the second leg of our climb. No one can say we have not made drastic improvements since 1993. Are we better today than 1993? The answer is yes. But, we must not deter from consistent daily improvement to reach our ultimate goal.

Current Budget Update:

Dr. Argenziano advised that as of Friday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, he has to prepare to cut \$1 million dollars from the budget. Cities and towns across the Commonwealth can expect a 10% cut. The likelihood of hiring two new teachers in light of this cut would be extremely difficult. His priorities are to make sure there are teachers with the tools they need and low class size. He advised that 12 retirement positions would not be filled. A question and answer session took place following the superintendent's report among school committee members and members of the audience.

MOTION: Ms. Harris made a motion, seconded by Ms. Rossetti, that at the present time, the school department keep all programs as they are and address these issues in conjunction with the Capital Improvement Plan. The motion was approved by a roll call vote of: Yes—7—Cardoso, Murray, Bauer, Harris, White, Rossetti and Sullivan; No—1—Taylor; Absent—1—Gay.

MOTION: Ms. Taylor made a motion to accept the Superintendent's recommendation to move the UNIDOS Program to the Edgerly, pending funding, for renovations. Discussion followed. Ms. Taylor withdrew her motion.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m. by voice vote. Chairman Sullivan wished everyone a Happy Valentine's Day!

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano  
Secretary