

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**October 21, 2002 REGULAR MEETING**

October 21, 2002

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairperson Dennis Sullivan called a Regular Meeting of the School Committee to order in the aldermanic chambers at 8:00 p.m., with a moment of silence and a salute to the flag of the United States of America.

**II. ROLL CALL**

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

No one was absent.

**III. AWARDS AND CITATIONS**

There were no presentations made this evening.

**IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Minutes were approved as follows by voice vote:

September 30, 2002:

- Rules Management Committee of the Whole Meeting

October 7, 2002:

- Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole Meeting

October 7, 2002:

- Regular Meeting

**V. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Student representative Kim Carvalho reported on the following items this evening:

She was happy to announce there were three hundred students in attendance at the homecoming dance held October 12th, representing a wide diversity at the high school of racial and ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations. No problems occurred at the dance and everyone had a very good time. The senior class would like to thank the teachers, building masters, Ms. Harris and the Auxiliary Police Department who all helped out at the dance. A special thank you was also given to the Somerville Fire Department who unexpectedly had to stop by and take care of a fire alarm that went off.

Congratulated the Somerville High School Football Team in the homecoming game victory against the Medford Mustangs.

Expressed that she took great pride, along with senior class president, Melinda Barbosa, for being invited to walk in the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Parade, which was a huge success.

**V. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (cont.)**

Reported that a brief assembly was held at the high school concerning the issue of hate crime, brought up at the last school committee meeting. This week, an article in the Somerville Journal concerning the gay bashing in the high school particularly upset high school students. Many students approached Ms. Carvalho with their concerns about the reputation of the high school and how these articles are ruining it. The Somerville Journal seems to be sensationalizing the issue and this offends many students and teachers. In rebuttal to the article, many students have submitted responses giving their views on the issues. An example used in rebuttal to this issue was the homecoming dance that was held and how no problems occurred.

Reported the seniors are preparing for Halloween, getting their costumes and last minute details ready. She expressed everyone is excited about this and the students look forward to dressing up for school this time of year.

**VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

Dr. Argenziano reported on the following items:

1. At the last school committee meeting held, on September 16, 2002, Dr. Argenziano mentioned he took particular notice on two occasions to praise Somerville High School for lowering their drop-out rate for the first time in fifteen years below the state average and to have only sixty students going in to the December MCAS make-up exam, not passing. At that time it was not his intention to put our high school in a position that we did not have blemishes, we didn't have problems, and we didn't have areas of improvement. He explained that he has a certain instinct and that on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>; October 3<sup>d</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup>, for five consecutive weeks following the meeting of September 16<sup>th</sup>, Somerville High School has been on the front page of the newspaper, not the article, but the headline. The headline two weeks ago talked about suicide and drugs. There is a certain instinct and a certain wisdom the Superintendent explained, that tells him there is a distinct pattern here and that when headlines come out as they have for the past five weeks, for the next seventy-two hours, people are in flux, two thousand people in the building, responding to phone calls and concerns. We have some great students, some young men, some young women in attendance in that that building; they go about their business during the day, doing their work, completing their projects, carrying on with their daily routine, and the Superintendent wanted to let the public know we have a great group of youngsters and for the past five weeks they have been treated as second class citizens and so tonight he just wanted to make them first class citizens. Dr. Argenziano expressed to the audience that our students deserve our gratitude; he feels what has been happening the last five weeks is totally unfair, and stated to Somerville High School's ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students to keep up the good work, we are proud of you.
2. Sent a thank you notice out to all members on the committee for Somerville High School's 150<sup>th</sup> Celebration. It was a great weekend and the Superintendent thanked all of the people involved. He reported that the profits we made had to go into paying the hotel bill, plus tax and in doing so, we broke even. It was a great year planning and again the Superintendent wanted to publicly thank the committee and congratulated everyone for a job well done.

**VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT (cont.)**

3. Reminded parents that there will be a Long Range Planning Committee meeting this coming Wednesday, October 23, 2002 at 7:00 p.m., at the East Somerville Community School to discuss future space issues.
4. Provided all members with a tentative meeting schedule through December 31, 2002.
5. At our last meeting of October 7<sup>th</sup>, Mayor Gay had asked for a needs assessment of our school buildings. Dr. Argenziano informed members he called New England School Development Council (NESDEC) and received a Request for Proposal to use as a template, which is enclosed in all members' packets.
6. Also provided to members in this week's packet was an E-Rate Funding breakdown. Dr. Argenziano thanked everyone involved for the work done in this e-rate funding breakdown - Kate Ashton, Grant Writer, Patrick McCormick, Chief Information Officer, Marie B. Ferrari, Assistant Superintendent for Finance and Administration, Candyce Dostert, Grant Writer, Joseph Mastrocola, Coordinator of Instructional Technology, and Tim Egan, Information Systems & Database Administrator.

Ms. Murray asked the Superintendent if he would have a press release sent out announcing that the City of Somerville has been awarded \$785,354.47 in E-Rate funding and to also acknowledge the people involved in this joint/city school effort. Dr. Argenziano responded that he would do so.

7. Provided to all members is MCAS student performance data which outlines our performance level from 1998 to where we will be after 2002 for the target date.
8. A memorandum from Dr. Steven F. Jenkins, District Administrator for Student Services regarding information about conducting assemblies at Somerville High School relative to zero tolerance toward hate crimes is enclosed for members. Dr. Argenziano advised that he received an October 8, 2002 letter from the Department of Education regarding the unfortunate news that the Safe Schools Program for Gay and Lesbian Students was not funded in the FY2003 budget. The letter provides us with a copy of the 1993 law as well as recommendations of support and safety. Dr. Argenziano also informed members that although funding for Project 10 East's involvement was cut from the state budget, the Somerville Public Schools continues to fund this program for the 2002-2003 school year.
9. Results of this year's summer reading are enclosed for members. The summer reading program is up to 71.3% participation. Dr. Argenziano stated we have tried to get all of our students involved on a voluntary basis in our summer reading program and we will continue trying to achieve a full 100%.
10. A memorandum from Mr. Robert A. Snow, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment concerning important curriculum notes on the following is provided: 1) High School Program of Studies 2) MCAS 3) Professional Development.

Discussion took place regarding the high school program of studies, specifically, whether or not new courses could be added this year. Mr. Snow answered all questions asked by school committee members and addressed any concerns they had. Ms. Murray stated discussion

**VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT (cont.)**

would continue at a future Ed. Programs and Instruction Subcommittee meeting. Ms. Bauer requested a master list of teachers of who is teaching how many courses and what their enrollments are. She would appreciate this information before the next Ed. Programs and Instruction Subcommittee meeting.

11. Enclosed is a letter from the Revere High School Athletic Department expressing appreciation from the Revere coaches and players concerning the actions of the Somerville football team when one of their football players was seriously injured during the last play of the game on October 4<sup>th</sup>. Mentioned in the letter was the tremendous display of sportsmanship and respect on the part of both teams and praise for our young athletes and coaching staff. Dr. Argenziano wanted to share this and also applauded Mr. Gulla and his staff and students for being there for someone else in a time of need.

Ms. Harris requested that Anthony Gulla, Head Football Coach and Captains, Robert Grasso and Jude Sylvan, attend our November 25, 2002 awards ceremony to receive a citation showing, once again, that we have outstanding students at the high school.

12. School Council Minutes from the Kennedy and Healey Schools were provided to members.
13. Mentioned that this past weekend, on Saturday, a Gridiron Breakfast was held at the Logan Post and over two hundred people were present. It was a great opportunity to share breakfast and see the turnout and support for our Highlander's football team.

**VII. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

- A. ***Ed. Programs and Instruction Subcommittee:*** Ms. Murray (Oct. 9)

Subjects discussed:

- ✓ Somerville Public Schools Web Page – presentation given by Mr. Joseph Mastrocola, Coordinator of Instructional Technology
- ✓ Massachusetts Advocacy Center – Special Education

- B. ***Finance and Facilities Subcommittee:*** Ms. Rossetti (Oct. 21)

Subjects discussed:

- ✓ Work Orders/Building Update – Mr. Robert Ciampi
- ✓ West Somerville Neighborhood School Acceptance
- ✓ Sale of the Conwell School / Budget Situation
- ✓ Approval of Billrolls (FY2002, FY2003)

Approved motions from subcommittee:

- To accept Commissioner David Dow's letter to the Somerville School Committee that the West Somerville Neighborhood School is now formally accepted by the City of Somerville. The motion was approved by a roll call vote of: Yes–9–Cardoso, Murray, Gay, Bauer, Harris, Taylor, White, Rossetti, and Sullivan.
- To accept and approve Billrolls (FY2002, FY2003), as submitted.

**VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**A. Unz Referendum/Proposition 2**

Ms. Cardoso asked the Superintendent of Schools to obtain an opinion regarding the sending out notices on Question 2. Dr. Argenziano reported he had talked to legal counsel at the previous request of the school committee, and it was suggested that since a public vote has already been taken, we should hold a press conference or send a letter to the newspaper editor. Ms. Taylor informed members that Attorney Hollander's concern was not so much sending a letter under school committee names advocating their position, but she felt it would be inappropriate to use public funds for this purpose. Lengthy discussion followed.

**MOTION:** Mr. Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cardoso, to write a letter to the editor of the Somerville Journal with school committee members' signatures opposing the Unz referendum and the motion was approved by voice vote.

**FRIENDLY AMENDMENT:** Ms. Bauer suggested a friendly amendment to also send the letter to all the community newspapers and the amended motion was approved by voice vote.

**B. Proposed Criteria for State-Endorsed Credential**

Ms. Cardoso referred to a letter received in the October 14<sup>th</sup> packet from the Department of Education regarding the proposed criteria for the state-endorsed credential for our high school graduates. In the letter there is a time line for a response for public comment and Ms. Cardoso wanted to know if the committee was going to respond. The public comment period is from October 4 – November 8, 2002. Discussion followed.

**MOTION:** Ms. Taylor made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cardoso, to respond to the Massachusetts Department of Education's request for public comment reiterating that it is the Somerville School Committee's past position they are not in favor of the MCAS as a graduation requirement and the motion was approved by voice vote.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Field Trip – Approved by voice vote.**

**Nov. 22, 2002:** Mr. John Welch, Grade 8, Winter Hill Community School, to New York City. Transportation by bus at a cost of \$65 to students.

**B. Keynote Speaker – Approved by voice vote.**

The Superintendent recommended that Mrs. Connie Filosi, Cosmetology Teacher, Somerville High School, accept the invitation to attend the Woman's Club of Aruba from November 5 – 8, 2002. Mrs. Filosi will be the keynote speaker at the monthly General Meeting of this organization that provides community service and organizes awareness campaigns on health related issues such as cervical and breast cancer, and HIV/AIDS.

**X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**Ms. Cardoso**

1. Reported that the Somerville High School 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration weekend was a wonderful time. Ms. Cardoso thanked everyone on the committee who helped out in making the weekend a success.
2. Had the pleasure of attending the Title I Prizeola and thanked Ms. Ellie Blute for all the work she did in making this an enjoyable event.
3. Mentioned that an internet safety pamphlet was received at the PTA Council meeting and Ms. Cardoso asked that these be distributed to the schools. The Superintendent responded that this was done last year.
4. Requested that a letter be sent to David Dow, D.P.W. Commissioner, requesting that park lights remain on throughout the evenings of October 30 and 31, 2002 for safety reasons due to Halloween.
5. A Special Education PAC meeting will be held this Thursday, October 24, 2002 at the Kennedy School at 7:00 p.m.
6. The Annual Spelling Bee will be held this Friday evening, October 25, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. at Good Time Billiards.
7. On November 2, 2002 a fundraiser will be held for the family of Amber Lily DaRosa at St. Anthony's Church, Cambridge. There will be food, music, raffles and an auction. For further information you may contact the Fundraiser Committee at (617)666-2191

**Ms. Murray**

1. The Kennedy School will be having their Historic Halloween Rap on Halloween day. There will be three showings – 9:00 a.m, 10:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.
2. Gave a brief update on *Somerville Cares About Prevention*. Members are working in a very small subcommittee to put together a data meeting to present the Grade 9 through 12 Drug and Alcohol and Youth Risk Survey results. Ms. Murray advised that this informational meeting will be televised on SCAT; the public will be notified when there is a date scheduled.
3. Thanked the Superintendent of Schools for putting a press release in the Somerville Journal informing the public of a very large grant that the Somerville Public Schools received for our alcohol abuse program. Ms. Murray also thanked Ms. Carol Gilberti and everyone else involved for their work in putting this grant together.
4. Wished everyone a safe and Happy Halloween.

**X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS (cont.)**

**Mayor Gay**

1. Informed members she spoke with Tufts University President, Dr. Bacow in reference to scheduling a time to meet with him. He responded he would like to meet all the elected city officials from Somerville and Medford at a gathering at his house and he is actively pursuing this. Mayor Gay will check to see if a date has been set and will get back to members.
2. Mentioned what a wonderful event the Somerville High School 150<sup>th</sup> Celebration was. People from out-of-state had come back to join us and a great time was had by all. Mayor Gay expressed congratulations to all who helped out in the many events that took place during the weekend.
3. Commented on the great show of people in attendance at the Gridiron Breakfast held this past Saturday. The Mayor stated she was very happy to be there, talking with all the parents and it was nice to see so many people joining in to support our football team.
4. The dedication of the new Conway Park was held Saturday, October 19, 2002. Mayor Gay mentioned it is a wonderful place for our children, whether they are teenagers or youngsters. There is something there for everyone - roller skating rink, basketball courts, and soccer fields. The dedication was very well done and the Mayor expressed a thank you to all involved and wanted to especially acknowledge Congressman Michael Capuano for starting the whole refurbishing of Conway Park. Mayor Gay also acknowledged two individuals who were selected to be especially recognized in the opening of Conway Park: 1) Firefighter Patrick Sullivan, who recently retired after spending thirty-six years with the fire department and 2) Officer John Conway, who was recently deceased. His family attended the ceremony in his honor. The Mayor encouraged everyone who hasn't had a chance to visit, to go by and see what a wonderful park it is.
5. The Spelling Bee will be held on Friday night, October 25<sup>th</sup>. Mayor Gay encouraged all to come out and enjoy the fun in support of the Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation.
6. Congratulated Mrs. Connie Filosi for being invited to be a Keynote speaker at the Woman's Club of Aruba.

**Ms. Bauer**

- 1) Winter Hill Community School will be having their PTA *Spooky Sundaes Night* on Thursday evening, October 24, 2002. The PTA put together a haunted house for all to enjoy and also, costumes are encouraged. Ms. Bauer invited all to attend, as this will be a fun time for everyone.
- 2) On Halloween Day, the Cummings School will hold a *Parade of Wonderful Horribles* at 1:30 p.m. Students and teachers will be parading around the neighborhood in great costumes.
- 3) The Somerville High School Cosmetology Department will sponsor a *Cut-A-Thon* on Friday, October 25, 2002 from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. to benefit the American Cancer Society.

**X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS (cont.)**

**Ms. Bauer**

- 4) The Cummings School will have Family Reading Night on Wednesday evening, November 6<sup>th</sup>, from 6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.
- 5) Ms. Bauer informed members she attended a Progressive Talkative Cooks gathering on Sunday, October 20, 2002. This is an ad hoc group that meets monthly to learn about and discuss local, national and international issues. Christie Mase, Somerville Women's Commissioner and Shenendoah Titus, Somerville Human Rights Commissioner made presentations. Both spoke about activities of their respective commissions, have vacancies for more commissioners and encourage youth and senior citizens to join their commissions. Recruitment may include contacts with Somerville High School and elementary schools; interested students (grade 7-12) are encouraged to contact commissioners directly to find out about the meeting schedule.

**Ms. Harris**

1. Mentioned she had the pleasure of attending a number of activities during the Somerville High School 150<sup>th</sup> Celebration weekend. The most memorable one for her was the homecoming dance and Ms. Harris expressed a thank you to all who participated in helping out with this wonderful event.
2. The Somerville Girls Varsity Swim Team met at Cambridge today, October 21<sup>st</sup>. Ms. Harris mentioned it was a great meet even though we did end up losing by a small amount, 86-78. Wednesday, October 23, 2002 marks the last swim meet of the year for Girls' Varsity against Lawrence. This is also Senior Day and we wish our three seniors well: Colleen Coulombe, Meghan McCauley, Jenelle Sullivan.
3. Ms. Harris invited the following girls to the November 25, 2002 Awards Ceremony to receive citations for setting new records:

Elizabeth Kennedy	200 Free	
Jenelle Sullivan	100 Free	1:08.10
Kathlyn Harris	50 Free	:29.34

Kathlyn Harris, Elizabeth Kennedy, Jennifer Rosa, Meghan McCauley: 400 Free Relay 4:43.41
4. Reported that Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, was *Healey Clean-Up Day*. There were sixty-seven parents, teachers, administrators and students involved in the clean-up. Ms. Harris thanked Mr. Bob Ciampi, Mr. David Dow, Mr. Jim Aurilio, Ms. Marty Pantanella, and Mr. Steve Quinn who also were a tremendous help that day.
5. On Saturday, November 2, 2002, the Choice Program will be holding an auction at 7:00 p.m. at the Dante Club. Tickets cost \$5.00.

**Ms. Taylor**

1. The Early Childhood Advisory Council will be having a meeting this Thursday evening, October 24, 2002 at 6:30 p.m. at the Early Headstart Building on Broadway.

**X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS (cont.)**

**Mr. Sullivan**

1. The Family Network is celebrating its fifth birthday on Wednesday, October 23, 2002 at 5:00 p.m. at 1060 Broadway.
2. On October 12<sup>th</sup>, Ward I had the pleasure of doing a community build at Perkins Playground. Home Depot and Kaboom donated all the park benches and trash receptacles. Mr. Sullivan commended all the community businesses and thanked everyone for a great day for Somerville and Ward I!

**Ms. Rossetti**

1. Reported that the Somerville High School 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration weekend was a great success! Ms. Rossetti expressed congratulations to all.
2. The West Somerville Neighborhood School will hold Family Night for upper classmen on Friday evening, October 25, 2002.
3. The Somerville High School Scholarship Foundation Annual Spelling Bee will be held Friday evening, October 25, 2002 at Good Time Billiards. Buffet dinner – tickets sold at the door.
4. Expressed congratulations to the Grid Iron Club for another successful community breakfast gathering at the VFW Logan Post. Congratulations as well, to, Coach Gulla and his staff and players for a fine display of sportsmanship at the recent Revere Football game.
5. The next Long Range planning Committee of the Whole meeting will be held Wednesday, October 23, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. at the East Somerville Community School. Ms. Rossetti encouraged all to attend.
6. The Massachusetts Coalition for Bilingual Education is sponsoring a Rally relative to the Unz Referendum this Wednesday evening, October 23, 2002 from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. at Faneuil Hall.

**XI. COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no items of communication this evening.

**XII. PERSONNEL**

There was no Personnel Report submitted for this evening's meeting.

**XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:54 p.m., by voice vote.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano  
Secretary