

**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
SCHOOL COMMITTEE**

**September 8, 2003 REGULAR MEETING**

September 8, 2003

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Mary Jo Rossetti 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. Harris, Mayor Gay, Alderman O'Donovan (arrived 8:30 p.m.), Ms. Bauer, Ms. Taylor, Ms. Murray and Ms. Rossetti.

Mr. Sullivan 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:  
Ms. Bauer and Ms. Murray voted present.

August 25, 2003:

- Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole Meeting
- Special Meeting

**V. STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Student representative Maya Nitzberg reported on the following items this evening:

School started on Wednesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Seniors, Juniors and Sophomores have had their assemblies. The Freshmen assembly was held today, September 8<sup>th</sup>, and Ms. Nitzberg reported a smooth transition.

This week all school clubs and sports are scheduled to start.

Ms. Nitzberg mentioned students are aware of all the changes that will happen this year due to the budget cuts. Each building master has one third of the incoming freshman, guidance counselors are responsible for more students and for some teachers there are a larger number of students in their classrooms. There is concern about the effect this will have on those students who perform poorly in school, have learning disabilities, language challenges, etc. Since this is only the second week of school, the impact the budget cuts will have concerning the seniors is not yet known.

In closing, Ms. Nitzberg stated she will try to be the best student representative for the high school students as possible, with student leadership groups meeting on a regular basis, as well as meetings with staff, school personnel, and Mr. Galligani. Ms. Nitzberg is also willing to speak with individual school committee members on how to work together.

**VI. REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT**

Dr. Argenziano reported on the following items:

1. Publicly thanked all staff - teaching staff, non-teaching staff, Principals, Custodians, and Secretaries, for a very smooth school opening. The Superintendent reported the projected enrollment is 5,850 students. There are 168 students registered for the eight smile sections at the new Capuano Center with a wait list of 27. We are registering the highest number of Kindergarten we have had in the last three or four years; 380 Kindergarten students are presently enrolled. Dr. Argenziano stated for those people who were present at the Michael E. Capuano Early Childhood Center Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, they saw what a beautiful facility it is and announced that the dedication of the school will take place on Sunday, October 26, 2003, from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Twenty people will have rooms or areas named after them. A sample small version of the school structure is placed at school committee members seats. This model will be given out to those people who attend the dedication. The Superintendent informed the community that the last section being taken care of is the field. Everything is in place and in the next four weeks the grass will be grown in, as this is one of the dedicated areas, it will look nice for October 26<sup>th</sup> dedication.
2. Enclosed is a finalized master list of goals and objectives for the 2003-2004 school year. This item will be discussed at the Long Range Planning Committee meeting of September 29, 2003. The committee will streamline this list of thirteen goals and bring it down to six to eight key goals and objectives for the school year.
3. Provided to members is a final work order list received from Mr. Ciampi, Facilities Personnel & Property Services Director that the Department of Public Works has compiled for the 2002-2003 school year. This is for members information.
4. Enclosed is correspondence from the Commissioner of Education. One is a memorandum regarding NCLB Requirements and Timelines, and the other is a letter regarding the Bay State Readers Development Grants.
5. Announced that, as of this morning, the Central Administration building elevator is now operating, after being out of order for three months and two days.
6. The Title I Annual Open House will be held this Friday, September 12, 2003, from 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. at the Winter Hill Community School. Ms. Elie Blute provided all members with this information, also including a notice for the Parents Advisory Council meeting.

**VII. REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

Before Report of Subcommittees, Ms. Rossetti informed the public of two motions that took place during the August 27, 2003 Executive Session Meeting.

MOTION: to remove the residency clause in the current contract of the Superintendent of Schools. This motion was approved by a roll call vote of 6 yes, 3 absent.

MOTION: to reconsider the above motion in the hopes that it does not prevail. This motion was defeated by a roll call vote of 6 no, 3 absent.

Brief discussion followed regarding whether or not a roll call vote of the motions should be taken during the regular school committee meeting. A roll call vote did not take place.

After discussion, Ms. Mary Jo Rossetti, School Committee Chair, and Dr. Albert F. Argenziano, Superintendent of Schools, signed the *First Amended Contract of Employment between Dr. Albert F. Argenziano and the Somerville School Committee*.

**REPORT OF SUBCOMMITTEES**

**A. *Finance and Facilities Committee of the Whole:* (Ms. Murray) Sept. 8**

✓ Water Safety Station Update:

The new fall schedule includes one new class which is an advanced water babies class for children 18 months - 4 years old, who will be taken into the larger pool on Saturday mornings. The majority of the swim classes are full, mostly by Somerville residents. Ms. Murray informed the public that the pool is self-funded and she commended the work of Mr. Cheney and all he has done to bring in the revenue to keep the pool running and also thanked him for making classes very flexible for families. The pool schedule is posted throughout the city, as well as being sent home with every child from school.

✓ Operations Update

As of July 1, 2003 the Somerville School Department budget is on line. The website is [www.somerville.k12.ma.us](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us). On that site you can directly view the budget. Ms. Murray encouraged people who do not want to go to the library or are having a time finding it, to go to the website. It is easily accessible. Other items discussed were the monies encumbered thus far, the contingency account, and the possibility of rehiring reading teachers.

✓ Personnel Update

The committee received a personnel report from Mr. Caliri, Human Resources Manager. Ms. Murray informed the public there has been an amazing three hundred four moves, meaning, teachers and other staff have left the system or have transferred within our organization. This number has tripled from years past. Ms. Murray thanked Mr. Caliri for the many hours spent behind the scenes and all the work he has done in preparing the organization. There are still approximately twenty to twenty five openings; food service positions, secretarial, custodial, SEIP math position, music, several community school positions, as well as some paraprofessional positions. The committee will be receiving another organization from Mr. Caliri in early October and members will be able to review the impact from last year's budget in an overall organization.

**VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business this evening.

**IX. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Sheltered English Immersion Program**

Ms. Bauer mentioned that last year at the Implementation Question 2 Plan information nights held for parents, many, many students at the high school level requested waivers. It was her understanding the school department would start off with the immersion program and then review the program after a certain amount of time. Dr. Argenziano responded to Ms. Bauer's request to talk about what the plans are for answering those waivers requested and reviewing the program.

Dr. Argenziano also responded to the question asked regarding who parents of high school students go to for help at the present time since we no longer have our transitional bilingual education office. He stated that Mr. Palazzo is housed at the Powder House Community School and through a grant, has been hired as a counselor/tester. Any parent who wants counseling assistance may go to him. Ms. Gunzberger will be at the high school for English Language Learners and Ms. Sarah Slive has been hired as an outreach consultant, especially for the Latino community. She is now in the process of distributing notices to parents to let them know she is available at the Powder House Community School.

Lengthy discussion followed. Dr. Argenziano responded to the questions asked and comments made by school committee members. Conversation came up regarding what plans other communities do or do not have. The Superintendent informed the committee information would be provided in this week's packet. There is a letter from the Department of Education regarding a two-day session workshop, *Implementing Sheltered English Immersion and Improving the Academic Performance of English Language Learners*, that the Somerville team attended with Sara Slive Davila as the team leader. There are additional workshops scheduled and all basic plans from the different communities will be discussed at those workshops, which are put on by the Department of Education and attended by all of the districts who have English Language Learners.

**B. SHS Diploma**

Headmaster, Thomas F. Galligani, recommended that the following student, who has successfully completed the requirements for graduation from Somerville High School, be awarded her diploma: Sheila Dornevil. Approved by voice vote.

**C. Subcommittee Meeting Dates**

Ms. Rossetti asked the Chairperson of each subcommittee to submit the dates of their subcommittee meetings, through December 2003, to the Superintendent of Schools.

**X. ITEMS FROM BOARD MEMBERS**

**Ms. Murray**

1. Briefly talked about the new Michael E. Capuano Early Childhood Center and expressed she feels this is the best decision, regardless of the budget, that was made, having the full day Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten program there. The Capuano Early Childhood Center

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

represents the entire city, people understand what the richness in Somerville has to offer and what we can provide for our children at such an early age. Ms. Murray commended the Central Office staff, especially the Superintendent of Schools, for having the foresight to make this happen so smoothly, along with Ms. Pamela Holmes, Supervisor of Early Childhood Education, for putting it all together.

**Ms. Taylor**

1. Announced the *Anti-Drug Billboard* is now displayed. It can be seen in the area of McGrath Highway, up above where the Somerville Boys and Girls Club is located. A very large model will be on display, temporarily, at City Hall. Alex Perez-Bonilla, who is a 1<sup>st</sup> grader at the Winter Hill Community School, is the Anti-Drug Billboard winner.
2. Informed the community that Somerville Cares About Prevention brochures have been put together by the parent committee. They are available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Creole. Ms. Taylor informed the public that the brochure is about parents talking to parents about helping children to make healthy choices.

**Ms. Bauer**

1. The Ed. Programs and Instruction Subcommittee will be meeting on Wednesday, September 17, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. at the Central Administration building. The tentative agenda items are 1) Early Childhood Education and 2) MCAS.

**Alderman O'Donovan**

1. Received a call from one of his constituents this afternoon asking when the Kennedy School Pool is available to citizens, more specifically wanting to know the hours for seniors. Ms. Rossetti informed Alderman O'Donovan the schedule is posted in all school buildings, on the website, and in the Library. Mr. Cheney, Director of Pool Facilities, can be reached at (617)625-6600, x6676.

**Mayor Gay**

1. Congratulated the Superintendent of Schools, Central Administration staff, and all the Principals across the school system on a very smooth back to school opening.
2. Reported that the new Capuano Early Childhood Center was a wonderful occasion to name a school after a sitting Congressman, our own Congressman, Michael E. Capuano. Mayor Gay expressed it was the highlight of the beginning school year to have Congressman Capuano talk about his achievements and how much it meant to him to have the school named after him. She stated we all appreciate what he did as the city's Mayor, and now, as our Congressman for the city of Somerville.
3. Announced that she and Board of Alderman President, Mr. O'Donovan, will reopen the newly renovated playground at Trum Field, located on Cedar Street, on Wednesday, September 10, 2003, at 6:30 p.m. If necessary, the rain date is Friday, September 12<sup>th</sup>.

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

4. On Thursday, September 11, 2003 at 7:00 p.m., there will be a candlelight vigil in remembrance of our national tragedy. Mayor Gay invited all in the community to attend as this will provide a moment for us to reflect on the past two years, while providing unity as Somerville and our nation continues to move forward. The vigil will begin at the corner of Willow Avenue and the Minuteman Bike Path and proceed down the path to Davis Square. Candles will be provided.
5. Mayor Gay reported she is circulating a petition for signatures from our city residents, especially the parents of our students who use Dilboy Stadium. This is an appeal to Governor Romney to get the Dilboy Stadium project underway. The Mayor wants to be sure the Governor understands the impact this has on our children here in the city.
6. Congratulated Alex Perez-Bonilla, a 1<sup>st</sup> grader at the Winter Hill Community School, who is the Anti-Drug Billboard winner. Mayor Gay reported a very nice event took place this evening during the cutting of the ribbon for the unveiling of his billboard.
7. There is a Ward IV community meeting tomorrow evening, September 9<sup>th</sup>, at the Healey School at 7:00 p.m.

**Ms. Harris**

1. There will be a Personnel Committee of the Whole Meeting on Wednesday, October 1, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. at the Central Administration building. The agenda items are 1) 2003-2004 Organization and 2) discussion on the tool used for the Superintendent of Schools evaluation.
2. Reported the following athletic events that are now, and will be, taking place:

<b>Varsity Football</b>	@ Swampscott	Saturday, September 13, 2003 @ 1:00 p.m.
<b>J.V. Football</b>	Swampscott	Monday, September 15, 2003 @ 3:30 p.m.
<b>Freshman Football</b>	Malden Catholic	Thurs., September 18, 2003 @ 6:00 p.m.
<b>Varsity Cross Country</b>	<b>H</b> Malden Catholic	Thurs., September 11, 2003 @ 3:45 p.m.
<b>Varsity Soccer – Boys</b>	@ Waltham	Monday, September 8, 2003
	@ Arlington	Wednesday, September 10, 2003
<b>Varsity Soccer – Girls</b>	@ Quincy	Monday, September 8, 2003
	@ Medford	Friday, September 12, 2003
<b>Girls Volleyball</b>	@ Revere	Monday, September 8, 2003 @ 3:30 p.m.
	@ Melrose	Wed., September 10, 2003 @ 3:30 p.m.
	<b>H</b> Everett	Thurs., September 11, 2003 @ 3:30 p.m.
	@ Waltham	Monday, September 15, 2003 @ 3:30 p.m.
<b>Varisty Golf</b>	@ Revere	Wednesday, September 3, 2003
	@ Cambridge	Thursday, September 4, 2003
	@ Malden	Wednesday, September 10, 2003

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

<b>Girls Varsity Swim</b>	@ Burlington	Friday, September 5, 2003 @ 3:30 p.m.
	@ Burlington	Wed., September 10, 2003 @ 3:30 p.m.
	@ Kennedy School	Thurs., September 11, 2003 @ 3:30 p.m.

**Ms. Cardoso**

1. Welcomed everyone back for the new school year and thanked everyone for a smooth start for the opening days of school.
2. Reminded parents and community members to volunteer at the different schools throughout the city. Now that schools are open, any assistance will be appreciated. Ms. Cardoso urged parents and guardians, as well as community members, to join the PTA councils and volunteer their services.
3. Invited the community to come out for a guided tour in Portuguese of the Windows Art Project (WAP). There will be a reception this Saturday, September 13, 2003, starting at 2:00 p.m. with bands and dance to follow the tour. WAP is one of the Boston area's largest public art events. The theme for 2003 is "Spaces/Places", exploring imaginary places and the unique spaces of Somerville and Union Square. The exhibit will be up in over 20 local businesses from September 7 – October 3, 2003. Saturday's tour will be led by Ms. Cardoso. Meet at the Union Square Plaza near MAPS and SCAT building.
4. Attended the Capuano Early Childhood Center opening on Tuesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, and mentioned what a wonderful event it was, and a pleasure to listen the Mayor's comments as well as Congressman Capuano's very moving statements. This was a wonderful day for his family and for our City, as well. Ms. Cardoso encouraged the community to visit the school because it is an amazing project along with the other three brand new buildings completed in the city.
5. Title I Program will be having an Open House this Friday, September 12, 2003, from 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Winter Hill Community School.

**XI. COMMUNICATIONS**

There were no items of communication this evening.

**XII. PERSONNEL**

There was no personnel report submitted for this evening's meeting.

**XIII. MOMENT OF SILENCE**

The superintendent reported with regret the deaths of the following persons. A moment of silence was observed and letters of sympathy will be sent to their families.

1. Nicholas Papas, Sr., (Sept. 2), father of John Papas, Adaptive Physical Education Teacher, Somerville Schools.

**XIII. MOMENT OF SILENCE** (cont.)

2. Doris L. Kearney, (Sept. 7), grandmother of Mr. & Mrs. J. Michael Pabian, Jr., Principal, Kennedy School.

Before adjournment, Dr. Argenziano, congratulated Ms. Natalie Viera, who is a new grandmother to Rachel Lynn Vallery, born August 29, 2003.

**XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m., by voice vote.

Dr. Albert F. Argenziano  
Secretary