

Dear Parent(s) and Guardian(s):

At the Wednesday, May 11, 2022, Southborough School Committee Meeting, two Albert S. Woodward Elementary School Grade 3 students presented their advocacy project to protect the Blue-Spotted Salamanders. The students' presentation, passion, and advocacy exemplify the type of skills and knowledge that the District's Strategic Plan articulates. The students demonstrated their ability to communicate, collaborate, think critically, and be socially and civically engaged. Well done Semona Peet and April Gibson.

Respectfully,

Gregory L. Martineau
Superintendent of Schools



May 11, 2022
School Committee Presentation
Albert S. Woodward Elementary Third Graders
Written by - Semona Peet and April Gibson

Hello,

Thank you for inviting us to present to the School Committee.

Our names are Semona Peet and April Gibson. We wanted to share a cool project that we have been working on! Here is how it all started for Semona and her family:

I really love salamanders because since I was five, I have been helping my family look for salamanders every spring to help them cross Oregon road, so they don't get hit by cars as they try to get to a vernal pool to lay their eggs.

All March, me and my brother are excited, and Mom is checking the weather to see if there will be a night when it is raining and the temperature is above 41 degrees. When that night comes, me and my brother bundle up in raincoats and the whole family drives to the wetlands in town. We walk up and down the road with flashlights, looking for salamanders to help them cross. It fills me with joy and excitement when I see salamanders or when I can help them.

At the end of last school year, me and my mom looked up to see if we had a state amphibian and we found out that we don't, but 27 other states do! After thinking about different species, I decided the blue-spotted salamander would make a good state amphibian because it is state threatened and needs help. Also, any attention it gets would be helpful for other salamanders and animals that live in vernal pools.

What has happened recently?

Since we found out the Andover Animal Advocates from Andover High School were working on the same project, we joined forces with them to get support for the bill. I was able to meet Representative Dykema and Senator Eldridge and ask them to co-sponsor the bill. I have talked to my school classmates, Cub Scout pack, and Sunday School, asking kids to make drawings of support like this one. I presented to the Southborough Conservation Commission, and the Mystic River and OARS watershed associations. I have also presented to Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight. Through emails, we have also gotten support from the Vernal Pool Association, Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions, and other organizations. There was a vote, and unfortunately it did not pass this time. It was sent to study. We are optimistic for what is ahead!

What will be happening in the future?

The bill will be reintroduced again in January or February 2023. In the fall, we will be trying to contact schools all around the state to ask their students to draw pictures and write letters. We ask that all the Southborough elementary schools (and the high school) get involved to draw pictures of blue-spotted salamanders and write letters and also to spread the word about the bill to friends and family in different parts of the state. More information will be shared at a later date. Working on this project is a good lesson in science, writing (if kids write letters), and how government works.

Do you have any questions for us?

Thank you for your support and time!