



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Housing, Community Development and Equity Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 4, 2026

6:00 PM

This meeting was held in-person and virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:07 pm by Chair Strezo and adjourned at 6:57 pm with a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilors Strezo and Link), none opposed, and one absent (Councilor Sait).

Roll Call

Present: Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait, City Councilor At Large Jon Link and City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo

1. Public Hearing

1.1. Public Communication (ID # [26-0265](#))

That this City Council hold a public hearing on the petition submitted by 52 registered voters regarding Out of the Blue Community Arts Space at Arts at the Armory, pursuant to Section 2-11 of the City Charter.

Councilor Sait noted that she would recuse herself from the discussion as the ward councilor for the space and due to her involvement in the tenant selection process.

Chair Strezo opened the public hearing at 6:07 pm and shared that the purpose of the meeting was to hear feedback from the community and that no decision would be made that evening.

Parama, CEO of Out of the Blue Art Gallery, described beginning her work in the Armory building in 2019 after being invited by the former owner of Arts at the Armory to curate art while also living and working in the space. She stated that operations became difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic and that when the City acquired the building through eminent domain in 2021, tenants were told they would be evicted. She described concerns about subsequent interactions, including police reports she said contained false accusations and a later notice from the City stating she could no longer live in the space following the death of the gallery's founder in July 2025. Steven, also from Out of the Blue Art Gallery, expressed concern that decisions about the future of the space may have already been made and described what he characterized as hostility toward tenants after the City acquired the building, including questions about lease legitimacy and loss of access to the building's mailbox.

Eleven additional residents spoke in support of preserving the Out of the Blue Art Gallery and maintaining arts and cultural space within the Armory building. Residents emphasized the gallery's long history as a community-centered arts space and described it as an important third space

for artists and community members. Speakers highlighted the gallery's role in supporting local artists, including artists with disabilities who rely on art as a primary source of income, and noted that it has served as a welcoming and inclusive space for people from many backgrounds. Residents also described the gallery as culturally significant to Somerville and the broader Boston arts community. Several speakers referenced the gallery's decades-long presence in multiple locations over the past thirty years and its role in hosting art exhibitions, music, and performance events. Residents noted that the gallery provides opportunities for emerging artists and preserves the work of artists who have since passed away. Multiple speakers urged the City to preserve creative spaces like the gallery and to develop a long-term master plan for the Armory building that includes current tenants and diverse community voices. One resident questioned why tenants were being evicted and asked the City to provide a clearer explanation of its plans for the building.

Chair Strezo closed the public hearing at 6:55 pm and emphasized that public comments could be submitted until 5:00 pm on Friday, March 6, to publiccomments@somervillema.gov.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION