



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

November 13, 2019

REPORT OF THE RODENT ISSUES SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Stephanie Hirsch	Chair	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Vice Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Annie Connor, Khushbu Webber, Doug Kress, David Shapiro and Georgianna Silveira. There were also several members from the community.

The meeting was held in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:00 pm by Chairperson Hirsch and adjourned at 7:03 pm.

Approval of the April 08, 2019 Minutes.

RESULT:

ACCEPTED

207380 - That the Administration work with this Board to consider strengthening rodent eradication as part of building demolition, potentially using as an example the ordinance of Nassau County, Long Island, which requires proof of eradication before allowing demolition to proceed.:

Mr. Shapiro reviewed the ordinance. Ms. Silveira stated that the director of ISD is involved with permits for demolition. Ms. Silveira said that there are some aspects of the Nassau County ordinance that she thinks are stronger than our current ordinance, mainly requiring that rodent control happen before the demolition work begins. Chairperson Hirsch will meet with ISD.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

207944 - That the Director of Health and Human Services provide the Special Committee on Rodent Issues with an update of the Department's rodent survey.:

Ms. Silveira shared slides on the Rodent Traffic Survey from spring 2019 in East Somerville. Slides are attached. There were 300 rat traps set out and were tracked every other day. Approximately 90 rats were caught at 30 properties. Ms. Silveira discussed three main points:

1) higher rat activity around multiple trash violations, like dumpsters, 2) construction site with rodents and 3) no difference in activity in areas recently baited. Some residents in the committee room stated they see rodents eating the poison and do not see any dead rats. Residents also asked if traps, rather than poison, are more effective. Ms. Silveira said that traps are effective, however, they are labor intensive to use.

Ms. Silveira stated she is in the process of developing a study relating to traps and trap motion activity. In the spring, she will start looking to target different areas maybe in Ward 2 which is the second highest count with rats.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208904 - That the Director of Inspectional Services inspect Gilman and Aldrich Streets regularly for trash and other violations that increase rodent activities and report back to the Ward One Councilor on any fines issued.:

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

209050 - That the City Solicitor and the Director of Health and Human Services provide options to increase the City's authority to address rodent issues on private property.:

Mr. Shapiro, Mr. Kress and Ms. Silveira came to the table to answer questions from the committee. There were discussions about complaints issued if property owners fail to bait their property. The city may be able to bait if they can get consent from property owners or may need to go to court to get access to property. Chairperson Hirsch asked if baiting was the best practice to rid property of rodents. Ms. Silveira said there is more to ridding property of rodents than just baiting. She stated that baiting, removing conducive elements away such as brush around areas. Ms. Silveira is working closely with ISD to track calls about rodents. Mr. Kress stated there was an increase in the city's residential baiting program over last year.

Chairperson Hirsch allowed a few members from the community to speak on their issues with rodents. Mr. Kress was asked by Chairperson Hirsch how to strengthen the ordinance. Mr. Kress suggested increase fines, put process in place and a threshold on how many fines before city would take over. Councilor Ewen-Campen stated the changes sound to be policy changes, not ordinance changes. Changes to our systems or policies will take coordination between ISD and Health and Human Services. Policy changes will come out within the next two months and share with the committee members. ISD was unable to attend tonight's meeting. Chair Hirsch said that she would set up another meeting.

Ms. Silveira is working on a new outreach strategy targeted to renters. Other communications go to owners who may not live on the property.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE****Handout:**

- Rat Study Update (with 207944)