



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

6:00 PM

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:01 PM by Chair Mbah and adjourned at 8:27 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Clingan, Wilson and Mbah), none against and 2 absent (Councilors Burnley and Sait).

Others present:

Director Rachel Nadkarni – Economic Development, Director Luisa Oliveira – Public Space and Urban Forestry, Yasmine Raddassi – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Chair Mbah reported that Councilor Sait had a prior commitment and that Councilor Clingan was appointed by the Council President to replace Councilor Davis for this meeting only.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr., City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson and Jesse Clingan
Absent: Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [25-0753](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee Meeting of April 7, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Mbah, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., City Councilor At Large Wilson and Clingan
ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

2. Officer's Communication
(ID # [24-1552](#))

Director of Sustainability and Environment conveying an overview of the Commonwealth's Clean Energy Goals, Electric Sector Modernization Plan, demand growth in Somerville, and capital projects underway or planned.

Liaison Raddassi noted that this subject was discussed in 2024 and 2025 and that part of the conversation concerned long-term strategies for the next decade. There is no further update at this time.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

-
3. Order
(ID # [25-0917](#))
- By Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Mbah, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Sait, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson That the Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry discuss with this Council, opportunities to create a dog park in West Somerville.
- Chair Mbah read an email from Councilor Davis into the record, (attached). Director Oliveira noted that a feasibility study was conducted in 2019, and although that study has some flaws, the fact remains that Somerville does not have dog parks in the western part of the city. Some locations were suggested but were determined to be unfeasible. Any area used as a dog park would need to be fenced and not located adjacent to residential property. One property that was suggested is owned by Eversource and the city can't tell them what to do with that private property. Director Oliveira commented that there is a need and she favors having a dog park in West Somerville. She cautioned that if an area is not provided, people will let their dogs onto Dilboy field, which would not be ideal. Councilor Wilson commented that it would be nice if Tufts would consider providing a solution by allowing some of its property to be used. Councilor Clingan noted that the state has a lot of open space in Somerville and Director Oliveira will try to find out the reasoning for the state not allowing some of its space to be used as a dog park.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
4. Order
(ID # [25-1134](#))
- By Councilor Sait and Councilor Mbah That the Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry plant new trees and maintain existing trees in Magoun Square, on Medford Street and on Broadway.
- Director Oliveira reported that trees have been planted on Broadway and that more will be planted on central Broadway. Wards 1 and 2 have been completed and work in ward 3 is underway. Tree planting in Magoun Square is a few years away. Director Oliveira noted that the city plants 350 street trees each year and that there are approximately 16,000 trees in the city. She commented that although some trees are lost in private spaces, the tree canopy in public spaces is fine.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
5. Order
(ID # [25-1345](#))
- By Councilor Mbah That the Director of Economic Development provide a report to this Council on the impact of Greentown Labs, including job creation, local economic activity, community engagement initiatives, climate and sustainability contributions, and equity and inclusion outcomes.
-

Director Oliveira spoke about Greentown Labs saying that it is the largest cleantech incubator in North America and provides technical assistance to more than 140 Somerville companies. The start-up results (for both Somerville and Houston) as of 2024 are as follows:

- 575 Companies incubated
- 200+ Current Members (140 in Somerville)
- 89% Company Survival Rate
- \$9.8B+ in Economic Impact (as of 2022)
- \$8.2B+ Investment Capital Raised
- 560+ Patents
- 13,500+ Jobs Created

Director Oliveira commented that Greentown has a ‘sticky’ relationship with Somerville and the state, in that their relationship is strong and ongoing. For example, 89% of startups in the early years received \$11 million of support from MassCEC, 71% of companies in the pre-Covid years had employees from local universities, 66% of alumni companies grew within Greater Boston between 2011-2019, and alumni companies regularly retain membership to be part of community programs.

Examples of alumni companies and their local growth are:

- Form Energy - began with 5 employees and now employs over 350 workers in Somerville, alone
- Sublime Systems - launched 5 years ago and currently exploring opportunities to supply the city with their product for city projects,
- Transaera - next generation HVAC products

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

6. Order
(ID # [25-1346](#))

By Councilor Mbah

That the Director of Parks and Recreation install a clock on top of the Dilboy Pool building.

Liaison Raddassi told the committee that any additional context that could be provided would be helpful while the department awaits the selection of a new director. Director Oliveira noted that the pool is owned by DCR.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [25-1350](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Clingan and Councilor Mbah

That the Director of Health and Human Services create a summer job in the Mayor's Jobs Program by which youth can travel by bike to water public trees around the city.

Liaison Raddassi stated that the administration is having internal

conversations about this matter and noted that the DPW has some concerns about contractual considerations.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Order
(ID # [25-1375](#))

By Councilor Wilson, Councilor Scott, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Mbah

That the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management and the Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry update this Council on the status of ArtFarm and the funding for the project.

Chair Mbah asked if the ArtFarm project is ever going to happen and Liaison Raddassi explained that a funding strategy is needed and that the project is tied to the CIP.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

9. Order
(ID # [25-1427](#))

By Councilor Scott, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Mbah, Councilor Sait and Councilor Davis

That the Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry discuss with this Council, a policy for use of open space on municipal property around city buildings for community gardens.

Chair Mbah referenced an email sent to committee members by Eilish Brown, (attached).

Director Oliveira told the members that she met with Ms. Brown to discuss her concerns. The director explained that there are a number of potential problems involved, e.g., being in an urban environment, some land may be contaminated and if the city tests land and finds it contaminated, the city must remediate it. Some of the suggested sites are city properties and if the city does not test them and something happens, the city is liable. The director commented that other opportunities available and that she doesn't know if the city has parcels that could be used.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

10. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [25-1495](#))

Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry conveying the Somerville Pollinator Action Plan and related updates.

Director Oliveira told the members that this is the first of its kind in the state and that it is being used by other communities. An advisory committee worked for a year and a half on producing this plan, which is hyper-local and heavy on science.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

11. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [25-1531](#))

Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry conveying the Somerville Open Space and Recreation Plan 2025-2035.

Director Oliveira addressed this topic and mentioned that the least amount of open space is in brickbottom, however, the walkshed (the area around a central point that is reachable on foot for an average person) is 10 minutes in Somerville. She commented that pocket parks being created and noted that roof gardens are governed by ordinance and are not generally accessible to the public.

Councilor Wilson noted the report's desire for unprogrammed open spaces and he would like to see community hours for turf athletic fields. Director Oliveira responded by saying that it wasn't part of the neighborhood discussions and that people wanted spaces to walk. She pointed out that the outreach isn't representative of the desires of those who actually use the fields. The Recreation Department handles permitting for the fields and she feels that the public should be allowed to use them, so maybe having community hours is an option.

Councilor Wilson asked about community gardens and the director said there are 600 plots now and that there will be more of them. She explained that once someone gets a garden, it's theirs for life and that it's those people that hold the places together. Community gardens build community, yet some people feel they should be abolished as it privatizes those spaces, while some believe that the spaces could be better purposed.

Councilor Wilson asked about Lincoln Park saying that it can't support a full program of activities as intended and that more grass athletic fields are needed. Director Oliveira said that she has not been involved in that soccer field for some time but said that the city has enough synthetic fields to support sport growth, although she doesn't know the current status.

Councilor Clingan inquired about the Mystic River Outfall and Sewer Separation project's (MROS) effect on pollinator garden on the Mystic bank and the director said she is aware of it and that it can't be avoided due to infrastructure needs. Councilor Clingan asked about a MOU with the state regarding control of Foss Park and noted that the state has no desire to get involved with dog parks. The director said that DCR made a big investment at that park and it gets a lot of use. Trees have been planted there and she commented that it's difficult to get DCR to make changes.

RESULT:	<u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u>
----------------	---

Referenced Documents:

- OSEE - 2025-12-03 Memo (with 25-1375)
- OSEE - 2025-12-03 Presentation (with 25-1345)
- OSEE - 2025-12-03 Presentation (with 25-1495, 25-1531)
- OSEE - 2025-12-03 Email from Eilish Brown (with 25-1427)
- OSEE - 2025-12-03 Email from Councilor Davis (with 25-0917)