



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

March 20, 2017

REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Katjana Ballantyne	Chair	Present	
Robert J. McWatters	Vice Chair	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five Alderman	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six Alderman	Present	
Dennis M. Sullivan	Alderman At Large	Absent	

Others present: Brad Rawson - OSPCD, Walter Whitney - Buildings & Grounds, Jill Lathan - Parks & Recreation, Jeff Winsor - Parks & Recreation, Vanessa Boukili, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Charles Sillari - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:30 PM by Alderman Ballantyne and adjourned at 9:11 PM.

Approval of the November 30, 2016 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Approval of the November 15, 2016 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Approval of the February 1, 2017 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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202276: That the Chair of the Conservation Commission report to this Board with an update on that Commission's activities, primary concerns, and issues that are being worked on.

Mr. Rawson told members that there is a plan to find additional space and that the waiting lists vary in size depending on the garden. The committee discussed an expansion of community gardens, improvements with the community garden program over the past few years, the Federal

Clean Water Act, Groundwork Somerville, the removal of invasive species, developers and utility companies. Alderman Niedergang discussed his concerns with the community garden program.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

202973: That the Director of SPCD provide this Board with the tree planting plan for the city, by Ward.

Mr. Rawson explained how the city is approaching urban forestry and looking to purchase the best urban friendly assets possible, with an eye toward native species. The committee discussed community involvement in the selection of trees, funding, soil condition and an Arbor Day celebration, that will be held on April 23rd. Members were told that the current amount of soil in the city for trees is not enough.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

201753: That the Mayor re-establish the Tree Advisory Committee, to be staffed by the full-time Arborist, expand its membership to 9 or 11 members, and broaden the scope of the Committee's duties.

Mr. Rawson said there is an ordinance on the books and Ms. Boukili spoke about the process of choosing species when planting trees. Ms. Boukili also spoke about maintenance schedules, community outreach and recommended changing the name of the committee to the Urban Forestry Committee. Alderman Niedergang discussed the need for a committee to discuss open space.

The committee discharged this item and requested that it be referred to the Legislative Matters Committee.

RESULT:

DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION

201488: That the Director of SPCD confirm that only native trees are being used in the Lincoln Park renovation and advise of the species.

Mr. Rawson spoke about the type of trees being selected and Ms. Boukili spoke about the reasons why certain species were selected.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

202018: That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Sustainability and Environment report to this Board, and to the School Committee, on the use and necessity of pesticides in city-owned or city-maintained properties, and report on how organic maintenance would compare to current practices.

Mr. Winsor spoke about the definition of “organic”, saying that it is not regulated in horticulture as it is with food. There are organic fertilizers that are usually more dusty than synthetic versions; which are water soluble. Organics need to break down and are usually more costly and they will build healthy soil.

Alderman Niedergang asked if the city currently uses dangerous materials. Mr. Whitney said the current fertilizer being used is synthetic and is not a pesticide. There is a grub control that is an insecticide and RoundUp is also used, (but only under the bleachers at Trum Field). Lime is used on the athletic fields. All vendors are regulated by the state. Alderman Niedergang is not comfortable with the use of RoundUp as it may cause cancer, according to certain studies.

Mr. Winsor discussed the necessity of pesticides and Karl Thidemann, of Soil for Climate, spoke about the importance of healthy soil. He discussed pesticides and their categories and RoundUp and its potential as a carcinogen. He went on to say that synthetic fertilizers should only be used when necessary, e.g., when some land is so bad that nothing will grow. Alderman Davis would like to know where certain items are being used.

Ms. Connor raised the point that the landscaping contract end date is soon. Mr. Whitney, Mr. Winsor and Angela Allen, the Director of Purchasing, will be looking into the possibility of building more flexibility into the contract by doing a 1 year contract rather than a 3-year contract. This would allow the city to evaluate and update which products are being used on a yearly basis.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202019: That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Sustainability and Environment report to this Board, and to the School Committee, on the type, brand, cost, and use of all cleaning agents used in city and school buildings, and report on how "green," non-toxic cleaning products would compare with current practices.

Ms. Connor said there is a policy being drafted towards buying greener products. Mr. Sellers-Garcia is working on this project. Alderman Niedergang would like to know what products are currently being used.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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201695: That the Director of Sustainability and the Environment report to this Board on reducing food waste and expanding composting at city schools.

Ms. Connor informed the members that recycling will be increased and that there will be pilot projects in a few schools. Chairman Ballantyne spoke about Nature's Classroom; which is a student program that practices composting and engages students not to create waste. Alderman Davis spoke about the importance of awareness and said that his child participated in this program. He doesn't feel that the rodent problem should stop the composting initiative. Alderman Niedergang said the School Department is very busy, and the school committee should be involved in this.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202726: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board the City's position on installing artificial turf fields with crumb rubber infill while the US EPA studies the potential health and environmental hazards of such infill, and explain why the City doesn't use organic infill.

The members were told that crumb rubber is the industry standard and the most tested. Studies do not say it is dangerous. Members discussed hours of play was discussed, the carbon footprint of each product and other cities using crumb rubber. Alderman Niedergang is uncomfortable with the use of crumb rubber and doesn't like the idea of installing new fields with the material. He wants to know the cost comparisons, but is more concerned with health issues rather than cost. Alderman Davis said that he prefers grass but understands the turf issue, adding that he can't find conclusive evidence that crumb rubber is dangerous. Alderman Niedergang said this issue can be raised again when there is a field to fund.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

202526: That the Commissioner of Public Works provide the Special Committee on Open Space, Environment and Energy with a list of problem lights and what was done to address them.

Ms. Connor distributed a memo from the DPW regarding this matter.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

Handouts:

- Potential Planting Sites (with 202973)
- OSPCD Recommendations (with 201753)
- Lincoln Park Tree Planting Plan (with 201488)
- Turf Infill Comparison (with 202726)
- LED Adjustment Requests (with 202526)