



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 22, 2020

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Lance L. Davis	Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Vice Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Absent	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Absent	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Absent	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Absent	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Absent	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:02pm and adjourned at 6:57pm.

Councilors Scott, Ballantyne, Mbah, Rossetti, and White were absent due to the Finance Committee meeting held at the same time.

Others present: Khushbu Webber - Mayor's Office; Doug Kress - HHS; Brianna Noonan - SomerStat; Omar Boukili - Incident Commander

Approval of the June 1, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Approval of the June 8, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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209798: That the Director of Health and Human Services appear before this Council with an update on measures to reduce the spread of the coronavirus and to support anyone who may become infected.

Ms. Noonan presented the weekly situation updated, noting that key dates since the previous meeting include June 19, when a second shared streets route opened in West Somerville; small Business COVID-19 Relief Fund loan recipients were announced; the face covering order was altered for summer months; and pools, playgrounds, and other recreation areas reopening schedule was announced. The global trends show 8.9 million cases worldwide, an increase of 13%. In the United States, there are approximately 2.5 million cases, an increase of almost 9%. Massachusetts now ranks 6th by the number of cases, and 3rd by the rate of cases per population. In just the last seven days, MA ranks 28th.

The MA Department of Public Health (MDPH) dashboard indicators all remain positive or in progress, with declining hospitalizations and deaths. Total cases have also increased only 1.4% over the previous week, with tests increasing 8.5%. As of June 17, Somerville had 1,203.3 cases per 100,000 residents, which is up from 1,181.1 on June 10. Somerville also had 13,753 tests per 100,000 residents. Bedford has the highest testing rates across MA (28,128). Additionally, 8.8% of the Somerville residents who were tested for COVID-19 had positive test results, which is a decrease from 9.8% on June 10. As of Monday, June 22 at 10:15 am: 975 Somerville residents tested positive; 865 recovered; there were 31 fatalities; and 110 active cases remain. The 7-day and 14-day moving averages are approximately 4 new cases per day.

The City Emergency Food Pantry will close on June 26, with 80% of households reporting that they are now able to procure groceries. The Shape-Up Mobile Farmer's Market will launch on July 11. The Somerville Public Schools (SPS) meals program distributed 4,639 meals (breakfast and lunch), and SPS will continue distributing meals at the four school sites throughout the summer on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9am-11am.

The Fire Department reported five COVID-19 related medical calls in the last week, which is three more than the prior week. As of June 19, there are 301 cumulative COVID-19 related medical calls. Last week saw an average of one COVID-19 related call per day.

Mr. Kress reported that reopening is underway, and noted that the face covering requirements have been adjusted to accommodate for summer weather. He also thanked the school nurses and noted that many will continue working throughout the summer. The testing has increased to over 200 people per day being tested. Partners in Health will continue working with the City to assist with contact tracing, particularly as school nurses leave for the summer. The emergency food pantry is being demobilized, but existing partners will be leveraged to assist during the transition. The Metro East Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) is continuing in a volunteer capacity to assist with outreach.

Councilor Strezo asked about food pantry availability in the summer months, and Mr. Kress confirmed that programming will continue, and the department is working to determine how to best reach students, given the decrease in summer youth programs. Chair Davis requested an update in writing, given that the next meeting is two weeks away. Councilor Niedergang asked about the policy around religious services and houses of worship and Mr. Kress shared that there was a community town meeting held to determine the appropriate guidelines, which have been sent to houses of worship as they begin holding services again. This does not extend to other services or activities. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked whether hand washing stations can be included at playgrounds as part of the reopening plan. Ms. Webber will research and provide an update. Councilor Ewen-Campen also asked about testing levels, noting that the number of tests in Somerville is increasing, but the state is nowhere near the goals it set. Mr. Kress agreed that testing needs to continue, and Somerville is continuing to try to be a leader and promote testing as much as possible. Targeted outreach to low-tested areas in Ward 1, as well as outreach through faith-based organizations and the immigrant services unit to immigrant families, and having language services available through CHA

has been helpful. Regionally, the City continues to emphasize the importance of testing and identifying any pockets of positive cases. Councilor McLaughlin asked about indoor dining and Ms. Webber noted that the second half of Phase 2 of the state plan, allowing indoor dining, begins today. Mr. Proakis and Mr. Galligani of OSPCD are working on guidelines for Somerville and will provide an update. Chair Davis asked that this update be provided tomorrow, as many constituents and business owners are inquiring. Councilor Clingan asked for details about the plan to open parks and playgrounds, particularly the equipment, as it seems many barriers have been removed. Ms. Webber noted that playgrounds will be open on June 29. Any fencing and barriers removed have likely been to allow the DPW to prepare for opening. Hand washing stations will be included at some playgrounds, while others will have hand sanitizing stations. Ms. Webber will provide more details about what will be at each facility soon.

Chair Davis asked if there were updated numbers for public safety employees and Ms. Webber noted that no citations have been issued for violations of the face covering order and no arrests have been made derived from non-compliance with the face covering order. The amendments to the order for the summer should help ease the burden on residents. Chair Davis asked further if there have been any reported cases among the public safety departments (Police and Fire) and Mr. Kress noted that there have been no new cases reported for either department. Chair Davis also shared an experience from a constituent, noting that CHA billed a former insurance company in error and subsequently the resident received a bill. It was suggested that residents be made aware that they are not obligated to pay any bills that they may receive. Chair Davis asked as well about the food pantry, noting that although 80% of those surveyed stated that they can now access groceries, they may not be able to easily afford the food and supplies that they need. Mr. Kress clarified that there will still be safety nets available through other partners, such as Project Soup. The City will also be working to assist with expanding the Project Soup delivery program, for those who are unable to access a food pantry in the community.

Chair Davis emphasized that the successes have largely come from staying at home, and precautions are critical in re-opening so the numbers don't spike upwards again. Mr. Kress agreed, and added that this will be a long journey, with constantly evolving information. This must be a community response, with everyone contributing, to continue to avoid a surge. Opening slowly and with the data in mind, while continuing social distancing, face coverings, and hand washing, are all important components to a positive journey. He urged everyone to spread this message.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handouts:

- 200622 Situation Summary for City Council (with 209798)
- Places of Worship in Somerville - Guidelines (with 209798)
- Example Safety Plan 1 (with 209798)
- Safety Plan Example 2 (with 209798)
- Cleaning_Disinfecting Log - Sheet1 (with 209798)