



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

November 2, 2020

REPORT OF THE CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENTS AND PERSONNEL MATTERS COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Mary Jo Rossetti	Chair	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Vice Chair	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Rossetti at 6:05pm and adjourned at 10:42pm.

Others present: Emily Monea - Mayor's Office; Khushbu Webber - Mayor's Office; Ellen Collins - Personnel; Chief Charles Breen - Fire; Assistant Chief Chris Major - Fire; Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees

Approval of the September 17, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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210723: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Kenneth Silva to the position of District Fire Chief.

Chief Breen had each candidate at Fire HQ to facilitate the technology for remote participation.

Chair Rossetti asked who was on the interview team for this position and the following six positions for the meeting. Ms. Collins responded that the Chief, Assistant Chief, and Courtney Desir from the Mayor's SomerStat team participated. There was no representative from Personnel on the panel. Ms. Webber elaborated that the Personnel Department is short-staffed and it would have been difficult to get them involved in this process and the number of interviews that 7 promotions require, in the time frame necessary. Ms. Desir was in constant communication with the Personnel Department throughout the process. Chair Rossetti noted that there is a vacancy in the Director of Personnel position, and wondered how many hours the contracted Acting Director is working. Ms. Collins explained that it is a part-time temporary position that averages between 20-30 hours per week. The search for a full-time Director is in progress.

Chair Rossetti noted that the Chief submitted 9 names in March for promotion, one of which was approved in July, and 7 that are before the Committee this evening. She inquired as to who was missing.

Chief Breen confirmed that there was no list for the Deputy Chief position; the test was just held, and that position will be put forward shortly.

Chief Breen introduced Captain Kenneth Silva, who has been a member of the department since 2006 and has earned many certifications, in addition to being an RN and Air Force veteran. He is also working on completing a Masters Degree. Councilor Scott asked how the department has changed in the candidate's tenure and Mr. Silva noted that the demographics of the department are much younger, with many new firefighters, and cultural shifts toward focusing on education and expertise in the field, and the department has become more professional. The requirements for the Class 1 ISO involve strict adherence to record keeping and training, which is furthering the professional standards of the department. Councilor Scott confirmed that Mr. Silva was Captain at on Engine 2 for three years. Mr. Silva elaborated that much of the supervisory work takes place through email and phone, since the 24 hour shifts allow little overlap. The Captain is responsible not only for their shift group, but also the apparatus and the station as a whole. The groups are great at passing information between each other.

Councilor Scott asked if there were any disciplinary issues that the candidate had to address as a Captain, and there were none that rose to the level of formal discipline. Most day-to-day issues are addressed through building respectful relationships and communicating with the staff directly. Councilor Scott also clarified that Mr. Silva was in various roles as a Lieutenant, at all of the stations in the City, after starting at Engine 2 as a firefighter. Councilor Mbah asked what changes Mr. Silva would bring to the position, and one thing the candidate highlighted was training, and ensuring that the firefighters are ready to adapt to the new high-rise buildings, labs, and other developments in the City.

Councilor Clingan commended the candidate's continued pursuit of education, training, and improvement, and the work that he has done in the department. Councilor Strezo commented on the preparation for the future and the changing developments in the City, and asked for more information about what training that would entail. Mr. Silva responded that more equipment is required for situations like hooking hoses into the building systems, more personnel are needed, and hands-on training in the buildings to prepare for things such as having to walk up 15 flights of stairs with equipment.

Chair Rossetti noted that this role brings increased tasks with investigations and public relations, and asked how the candidate would handle being the representative of the department and the City. Mr. Silva noted that he has taken public speaking classes throughout his Fire Science education, and has some experience with reporters asking questions about a major fire. Councilor Scott added that both the Captain and Lieutenant job descriptions don't reference managing, and wondered how much management occurs at the District Chief role. Mr. Silva noted that he will stay on the 24 hour schedule, but much of the rest of the job will change, including that he will not be on a truck or have his own crew, and the increase in responsibility is significant. A lot of the studying he did involved management and leadership, and he feels his skills are strong from his military experience. The hardest change will be to no longer be hands-on on all calls, but to depend on his team at an incident. He has been in an acting role since February and has gained a lot of experience.

Chair Rossetti moved to enter into Executive Session to review protected personnel information or to discuss matters related to individual candidates pursuant to MGL c30A s21(a)(1). The motion was laid on the table at 6:54pm. The motion was taken off the table and approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Strezo, Clingan, Mbah, Scott, Rossetti) to 0 against at 8:31pm. The Committee entered Executive Session at 8:31pm and returned at 9:51pm. No votes were taken in Executive Session.

Councilor Scott shared some procedural concerns regarding the screening process for candidates. Assistant Chief Major confirmed that the panel did not include anyone from Personnel. Councilor Scott noted that an updated background check is a matter of procedure for promotions, and asked if the panel reviewed an updated background check. Assistant Chief Major noted that the process involved an interview, a discussion among panel members, and then a report of recommendations to Personnel on what the panel thought about each candidate. Assistant Chief Major elaborated that a background check

would not typically come to him or the Chief, but to the appointing authority or Personnel. Chief Breen added that he does not recall ever reviewing background checks on promotional candidates, only on initial hiring. Chair Rossetti confirmed that she could find the requirement for the result of criminal and background check noted only for new hires in the grid of documents required.

Councilor Scott also thanked all of the candidates for taking on these leadership roles.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

210792: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Justin Bonner to the position of Fire Captain.

Chief Breen introduced Mr. Bonner, sharing that he is currently a Lieutenant and Acting Captain. He has been a member of the department since 2011, and has a lot of IT experience. He is currently assigned to the Fire Prevention Bureau, where his IT skills have been very beneficial. He is also a Marine Corps veteran, and is pursuing a Bachelors Degree.

Councilor Scott clarified that Mr. Bonner formerly was a Lieutenant on Engine 6, for about 2.5 years, and Ladder 2 for a few months before moving to Fire Prevention. Councilor Scott asked about personnel management issues the candidate faced, and Mr. Bonner noted that nothing was so severe it needed to be escalated, and he was able to rely on forming good relationships to manage things that did arise at the company level. Councilor Mbah asked if the candidate had changed or wanted to change any policies or procedures, and asked what he has done as Acting Captain. Mr. Bonner noted that there was a lot of learning when he took the Fire Prevention role, and he looks forward to learning more about the station level management when he is back in a company as a Captain. Councilor Clingan noted that there is a high expectation for these leadership roles, and he believes the candidate has respect and will be able to handle conflicts and is well-suited for the job.

Chair Rossetti moved to enter into Executive Session to review protected personnel information or to discuss matters related to individual candidates pursuant to MGL c30A s21(a)(1). The motion was laid on the table at 7:08pm. The motion was taken off the table and approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Strezo, Clingan, Mbah, Scott, Rossetti) to 0 against at 8:31pm. The Committee entered Executive Session at 8:31pm and returned at 9:51pm. No votes were taken in Executive Session.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

210793: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Michael Khoury to the position of Fire Captain.

Chief Breen introduced Michael Khoury, who has been a member of the department since 2008, and is a technical and structural collapse specialist, as well as an honor guard volunteer. He is currently pursuing his Associates Degree.

Chair Rossetti asked about the candidate's role on the Fire Department Bicycle Team and Mr. Khoury noted that the team has been in place for approximately a year, and is used primarily for public events, to allow for a quick response, as well as provide general support. Mr. Khoury confirmed that he has been Acting Captain on Ladder 3 (Teele Square) since last October. Chair Rossetti asked whether he would remain there, and Mr. Khoury responded that he would like to stay there, but that is at the discretion of the Chief. Councilor Mbah asked what the process would be to rescue someone from a confined space, and the candidate elaborated that it would likely be a structural collapse or a manhole. Getting through the

rubble of a structural collapse would require tools as well as medical equipment, ropes, and harnesses. A manhole would require harnesses and rope systems, in addition to metering for gasses or other chemicals. Councilor Scott asked about the candidate's personnel management and Mr. Khoury noted that remaining fair but strict and standing firm to policies has worked for him, and he has not been in the situation of needing to write anyone up. He shared the example of uniforms, noting that it generally takes a direct conversation to resolve the issue. Councilor Clingan asked if the candidate has ever had to use his surface ice rescue certification, and he has not, but has maintained his training.

Chair Rossetti moved to enter into Executive Session to review protected personnel information or to discuss matters related to individual candidates pursuant to MGL c30A s21(a)(1). The motion was laid on the table at 7:21pm. The motion was taken off the table and approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Strezo, Clingan, Mbah, Scott, Rossetti) to 0 against at 8:31pm. The Committee entered Executive Session at 8:31pm and returned at 9:51pm. No votes were taken in Executive Session.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

210794: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Dennis Sullivan to the position of Fire Captain.

Chief Breen introduced Mr. Sullivan, who has been with the department since 2011 and is trained as a chemist, with a Masters Degree in Chemistry, and Bachelors Degrees in both Chemistry and Fire Administration. He is currently a Lieutenant and Acting Captain.

Councilor Scott noted that the candidate has been on Engine 2 for five years, and asked how often he is updated on policies. Mr. Sullivan noted that there is training on any new policies, which would be department-wide. He confirmed that he has not encountered any major management issues, and nothing that required escalation. He noted that treating people with respect and dignity and leading by example works well for him. Councilor Mbah asked if there was a file with more information and Mr. Sullivan noted that the Personnel file would contain any certifications and could provide that. Councilor Mbah also asked what changes the candidate is interested in and he replied that training is his biggest focus, and continued education in the field. Councilor Clingan voiced his support and confidence in the candidate. Chair Rossetti asked about the candidate's other work, and he is no longer employed elsewhere. The Chair recognized the candidate's specialized knowledge and noted that she is glad to have his skills available and hopes that they are not needed.

Chair Rossetti moved to enter into Executive Session to review protected personnel information or to discuss matters related to individual candidates pursuant to MGL c30A s21(a)(1). The motion was laid on the table at 7:31pm. The motion was taken off the table and approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Strezo, Clingan, Mbah, Scott, Rossetti) to 0 against at 8:31pm. The Committee entered Executive Session at 8:31pm and returned at 9:51pm. No votes were taken in Executive Session.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

210795: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Thomas Bellini to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen introduced Mr. Bellini, who has been with the department since 2012. He is a paramedic and assists with medical training. He also has training in technical rescue areas and structural collapse.

Additionally, he has been a great asset during the pandemic. He is pursuing a Masters Degree in Fire and Emergency Services.

Councilor Scott asked about the differences working with EMTs in a corporate environment versus a public safety environment. Mr. Bellini elaborated that he never had to terminate anyone, but much like a District or Deputy Chief, he would be in an SUV supporting the EMTs and paramedics, and was also responsible for fielding calls from the public, hospitals, vendors, nursing homes etc. Ensuring that the staff were properly handling hospital protocols were the primary issues he encountered. The managerial environment is more supportive in the City, which is something the candidate expressed appreciation for. He currently supervises two other members of Rescue 1 as the Acting Lieutenant and has not encountered any personnel issues. He is careful to listen to what his crew needs and work together as team. Councilor Mbah asked what policies or procedures or regulations the candidate wanted to improve. Mr. Bellini noted that he has enjoyed teaching training classes, and would like to be able to move that from a classroom setting to online, so it would be reproducible and could reach a larger audience. Councilor Mbah also asked about the ice rescue training and Mr. Bellini noted that there have been some animal rescues, and the department has used the boat with some frequency. Councilor Clingan asked about the candidate's response to medical emergencies such as overdoses, and Mr. Bellini noted that they are often first on the scene, and do carry naloxone on the apparatus. Councilor Clingan asked if the candidate ever reached out to other entities for issues he encountered during a response, and Mr. Bellini elaborated that he is a mandatory reporter, and will coordinate with other responders on scene to determine the best responses, whether building inspections, elder affairs etc. Chair Rossetti commended the candidate's pursuit of higher education.

Chair Rossetti moved to enter into Executive Session to review protected personnel information or to discuss matters related to individual candidates pursuant to MGL c30A s21(a)(1). The motion was laid on the table at 7:51pm. The motion was taken off the table and approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Strezo, Clingan, Mbah, Scott, Rossetti) to 0 against at 8:31pm. The Committee entered Executive Session at 8:31pm and returned at 9:51pm. No votes were taken in Executive Session.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

210796: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Eric Saulnier to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen introduced Mr. Saulnier, who has been a member of the department since 2012, and has hoisting and CDL licenses, and also holds a JD. Further, he has been an advocate for autism education.

Given that Mr. Saulnier is currently also proprietor of The Saulnier Companies, LLC, Councilor Scott asked about Mr. Saulnier's recruiting practice, noting that recruitment for the Fire Department is a concern. Mr. Saulnier noted that the department has evolved to a younger, more educated department, and is very diverse. Councilor Scott asked what the responsibility of the Lieutenant would be to create an environment that those individuals want to be recruited to and the candidate shared that understanding what people want and working to make them feel welcome is important. Councilor Strezo commended the candidate's work around autism. Councilor Mbah noted that Mr. Saulnier can use his recruiting skills to play a big role in increasing the diversity of the department. Councilor Clingan echoed the concerns around recruitment and the Civil Service exam, and noted that Mr. Saulnier could leverage his skills to help expand the department's efforts. He added that the promotion comes with responsibility, and he is confident in the candidate's leadership skills and involvement. Chair Rossetti asked why the Fire Department, specifically with a JD, and the candidate expressed that he has always wanted to work in the community and was interested in the department since childhood.

Chair Rossetti moved to enter into Executive Session to review protected personnel information or to discuss matters related to individual candidates pursuant to MGL c30A s21(a)(1). The motion was laid on the table at 8:10pm. The motion was taken off the table and approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Strezo, Clingan, Mbah, Scott, Rossetti) to 0 against at 8:31pm. The Committee entered Executive Session at 8:31pm and returned at 9:51pm. No votes were taken in Executive Session.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

210797: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Danielle O'Hearn to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen introduced Ms. O'Hearn, who has been a member of the department since 2007. She is currently the representative on the Safe Injection Site Working Group, has been a positive role model for women in the Fire Service, and volunteers with autism awareness organizations.

Councilors Mbah and Strezo thanked the candidate for her service. Councilor Strezo commended the candidate's diverse work, and her work with special needs children and families. Councilor Scott noted that Ms. O'Hearn has served on most of the City's apparatus, and she is now on Ladder 2 as Acting Lieutenant. The candidate clarified that there are currently two female commanding officers in the department. Councilor Scott asked about Ms. O'Hearn's experience, and she has had no issues, either as a firefighter or an officer. She spoke about leading by example and with respect. Councilor Clingan commented that she is well-equipped for the job. Chair Rossetti commended the candidate's work, and confirmed that she will find out in January whether she will be remaining at Ladder 2.

Acting Lieutenant O'Hearn informed the Chair she has worked multiple hours on numerous fires, some reaching 6, 7 and 10 alarms. Her first month on the job involved a major hazardous materials incident, followed by the multiple alarm fire of the East Somerville Community School. Her dedication to the job and to the community goes beyond her hours on duty. While off duty, she was the first responder to a Revere fire.

Acting Lieutenant O'Hearn is additionally the Department's liaison of the Overdose Prevention Task Force. Having had the honor of being a part of the first ever all female crew to work a Station shift, she is eager to see more females in positions of leadership, and grateful to have the opportunity to be among those paving the way for this to happen. Coming from a family of multi generational residents of Somerville, she embraces her role with dedication to the profession, but even more so to the City of Somerville.

Chair Rossetti moved to enter into Executive Session to review protected personnel information or to discuss matters related to individual candidates pursuant to MGL c30A s21(a)(1). The motion was laid on the table at 8:26pm. The motion was taken off the table and approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Strezo, Clingan, Mbah, Scott, Rossetti) to 0 against at 8:31pm. The Committee entered Executive Session at 8:31pm and returned at 9:51pm. No votes were taken in Executive Session.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

210721: That this Council prepare for interviews of applicants to the Wage Theft Advisory Committee.

Chair Rossetti noted that this Committee is yet to be formed, and she was made aware of a recent wage theft incident that indicates it should be a priority to put the Committee in place. One designee

is to be appointed by the City Council. Some names have been submitted, and she would like to start the interviews within the next few weeks to get the Committee formed. Ms. Webber confirmed that the Mayor is also in the process of making a recommendation and should have something by the November 12 City Council meeting. Chair Rossetti noted that the Mayor plans to appoint a member of the public, rather than a member of staff. There may also be a member who needs an interpreter, and Ms. Taylor in the Communications Department has agreed that she can help coordinate this, but noted that it may be costly. Zoom does offer Spanish interpretation within the program, and there are community interpreters that may be able to assist, but these details remain to be worked out. Chair Rossetti has also reminded the Chamber of Commerce that they need to submit a name also.

Councilor Scott added that the Committee doesn't have any staffing requirements per the ordinance. In terms of accessibility, the same GoToMeeting platform should be usable. The City also offers translation services for many other meetings, and this is an important issue and body that should warrant the same. Councilor Scott also elaborated that it could be a separate sub-committee or task force that reviews and interviews the nominees and provides a list of candidates to the City Council President. Chair Rossetti added that the funds for the translation services could come from the newly created Racial and Social Justice budget. Ms. Taylor had shared that the Communications Department's budget for translation services was depleted more than anticipated due to COVID-19. The Chair asked if anyone on the Committee interested in participating in a working group to conduct the interviews could please let her know. Councilor Clingan noted that if necessary, there may be funds from the Jobs Retention Trust that could be used for translation services.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208511: That the Director of Personnel provide the City Council with a monthly vacancy report.

Ms. Monea introduced the report, with new formatting to track vacancies over time. It will be updated monthly and tracked throughout the fiscal year. Chair Rossetti noted that this is more than double the vacancies previously reported, adding that hiring is drastically behind. Ms. Monea shared that there had been a focus on the seasonal employees such as poll workers, which are time-intensive for staff. There has also been a recent agreement with SMEA for posting internal bids and should allow for quicker movement on many positions. The HR Director and Talent Acquisition Manager roles have been particularly challenging to fill. Chair Rossetti emphasized that a monthly update of this report is important.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	Rossetti, Scott, Mbah, Clingan, Strezo

Handouts:

- District Fire Chief CAPM summary 11022020 (with 210723)
- Fire Captain CAPM summary 11022020 (with 210792, 210793, 210794)
- Fire Lieutenant CAPM summary 11022020 (with 210795, 210796, 210797)
- FY21 Vacancy LList Update 103020_DRAFT (with 208511)