



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES**

September 14, 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	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Absent	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:08pm and adjourned at 8:07pm.

Councilor Rossetti was unable to attend due to an inability to connect while traveling.

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

Tufts: Rocco Dirico, Michael Jordan, Chief Chip Coletta, Jason McClellan, Kevin Kraft

Approval of the August 17, 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 updates, beginning with key dates, including the September 3 announcement that the City will be monitoring wastewater for evidence of COVID-19, and the reopening of some additional businesses on September 8. As of September 11, the United States leads the world in both cases and deaths, followed by Brazil and India. The CDC reports the US at 6.3M cases and 190,000 deaths. By

state, MA has been falling, and is now 15th in total cases and 19th in rate per population. The Department of Public Health (MDPH) reports that Somerville is yellow, with an average daily incidents of 7.7 per 100,000 over the last 14 days. Most neighboring communities are also yellow or red. Massachusetts now has over 120,000 confirmed cases and almost 9,000 deaths. The new cases per day are increasing slightly over the last few weeks. Somerville has conducted a total of over 48,000 tests. As of September 9, 0.71% of the COVID-19 tests completed by Somerville residents over the last 2 weeks had positive results, a decrease from 0.89% of all tests on August 26. As of today, there are: 1,213 positive confirmed cases (PCR test); 94 positive probable cases (antigen or antibody test); 1,157 recovered cases; and 40 fatalities.

The Police Department data for the past 2 weeks showed an average of 68 calls for service (CFS) per day compared to 70 in 2019 and 64 in 2018. September 8 represented the second highest total Daily Incident-Response CFS in 2020, following July 4. The Fire Department last week (9/6-9/12) saw 5 COVID-19 related medical calls, which is 5 fewer than the prior week. In total, there have been 389 COVID-19 related medical calls as of September 12. Last week had an average of 0.75 COVID related calls per day

Chair Davis shared a question from Councilor Rossetti pointing out that the state data show 88 cases in Somerville, which varies from the City's website and Tufts University's website reporting. Mr. Kress did say that there has been an increase in positive cases in Somerville, but the data doesn't always match due to cases with an incorrect address that are added at a later date, as well as cases shifting from probable to confirmed. The 14 day moving average does help normalize this to some extent. Councilor Scott asked whether the divergence in testing reflects the increases in testing by the schools, and other businesses. Mr. Kress confirmed that there is a higher rate of testing, which affects the percentage. Councilor Mbah asked about the differences between calls for service and , and Ms. Noonan will confirm with her colleague in the Police Department to get an answer.

Councilor Strezo asked about the COVID testing for employees, particularly restaurant employees in Somerville. Mr. Kress noted that tests are returned to the Board of Health wherever the employee lives, rather than to Somerville directly. He added that Stop the Spread MA (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/stop-the-spread>) is a resource for free testing facilities, which can be utilized by employees looking to get tested. Many of them have no wait times, and there are a variety of language options. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about the wastewater monitoring, and whether that testing is underway and how the data will be shared. Mr. Boukili responded that samples have been collected, in collaboration with Northeastern, the Engineering Department, and Stantec. The samples are currently being reviewed for issues and baseline data in this pilot phase. Councilor Ballantyne confirmed that there are up to 10 locations around the City where samples will be collected, and the lab work will be done at Northeastern. Stantec is the on-call engineering firm, assisting with the location determination and the type of device used for the sample collection. The samples will be analyzed for their RNA signature to help determine prevalence. The locations will be determined by Stantec and the Engineering Department and many will be sampled and then the data will be compared to determine which are most accurate. The cost is based on samples and frequency, and the goal is to find grant funds (including possibly the CARES Act) to support the work.

Councilor Scott asked what the protocol is for SPD and TPD to respond to calls and how to track the individuals who are present. Captain Donovan noted that SPD is the primary responder, but has always collaborated with Tufts for enforcement and to provide administrative assistance, including student identification. There is voluntary compliance involved when students are asked for their identification. He added that there is a challenge to avoid over-policing, particularly in the area of code enforcement. The department is also tracking the homes and taking action to work with the homeowners in cases of repeat instances.

Councilor Clingan asked about measures to curb West Nile virus and/or EEE and Mr. Kress noted that wearing long-sleeves, repellent, and eliminating standing water will all help. ISD and DPW are looking for spaces that may create issues. Mr. Kress also noted that drive-through flu clinics will be available, likely in October. The locations and details will be announced when they are confirmed and can be found on the City's website. Councilor Clingan suggested that ISD check construction sites that are not active.

Councilor Ballanyne asked about the ventilation systems in the school buildings. Mr. Kress noted that Mr. Raiche would be able to answer this properly.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210428: That the Administration advise this Council as soon as possible, what oversight it will implement with Tufts University, following Tufts' decision to invite all undergraduate students back to campus for the fall 2020 semester.

Councilor Ballantyne sponsored a Tufts student, Georgia Kay, and a Tufts dining worker, Patricia O'Brien, to speak. Ms. O'Brien introduced herself as a Somerville resident and Tufts employee for 30 years. Ms. Kay is a junior and works with the labor coalition at Tufts, and they shared a letter from the coalition sharing concerns about the conditions under which dining workers are being required to do their jobs. They demanded additional jobs, a new operating system to match current demand, PPE, training, and dropoff locations for workers delivering meals to those quarantined, sick time and benefits for the workers, adequate testing for all employees, students and staff, and language translation for all COVID-19 related information. Ms. O'Brien added that a major problem is that the hours are extended, as the services are now mostly take-out, and each item must now be made to order, with no additional staff to support these extra hours and additional work. Dining workers are tested twice per week, but other employees such as mailroom and grounds staff are not.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210460: That the Administration and the Traffic Commission cease all dedicated Tufts shuttle stops and remove all associated signage in Ward 6, particularly in Davis Square, without delay.

Chair Davis noted that this is creating a situation that is not as safe as it should be. There have been crowds waiting for the bus and obstructing the sidewalk. He emphasized that this needs to be moved quickly, because it creates a hazard for pedestrians in Davis Square. Councilor Ballantyne echoed this and has had the same observations. She urged that changes be made as soon as possible.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210606: That the Director of Health and Human Services and Tufts University provide this Council with weekly updates on the number of unique COVID-19 tests administered to Tufts undergraduate and graduate students until all students have been tested.

Councilor Ballantyne asked whether all students have been tested at least once and Mr. Dirico noted that there are some students who have not yet arrived and/or checked-in, but all undergraduate students who have checked-in or been on campus have been tested. There are 144 undergraduate students who have not checked-in and the administration is working on connecting with them to

determine whether they will be in-person at all and enroll them in the testing protocols. Councilor Ballantyne encouraged the administration to share this information online as well. Faculty, staff, and affiliates who are on campus and student-facing have been tested. Student-facing employees will be tested once per week. Those who are remote are not part of the testing program. Dr. Jordan elaborated on the workers who have not been tested, and clarified that the policy for student-facing employees, including mailroom staff, is that they are tested twice weekly. In the positive case, all contact tracing was conducted. They will also be standing up symptomatic testing, for anyone with symptoms. Councilor Ballantyne also asked how food is delivered to students who are isolated, and Dr. Jordan shared that the food is brought to the modular housing units and left outside of the door by the dining staff. Nobody is coming into contact with any other individuals.

Councilor Clingan asked about the self-administration of the tests and Mr. Dirico confirmed that they are self-administered, but observed by Bewster EMT Services and must be done in a testing location on campus. Councilor Clingan also confirmed that these are the PCR tests, which are frontal nasal swabs. Chair Davis shared a question from Councilor Rossetti on data in a previous version of the dashboard that showed invalid tests and Dr. Jordan noted that these represent less than 1% of the total tests, and the 7 day weighted averages are not affected. He also highlighted that there is follow-up with those individuals to get a valid test result. Chair Davis also asked what actions have been taken against students who violate the social gathering policy, and Mr. Dirico noted that the policy is that they are subject to disciplinary action including suspension and expulsion. Dean Kraft added that there have been a small number of violations reported, and TPD has taken disciplinary action. Councilor Davis confirmed that the policy mirrors the City's, where any gathering with more than 10 people would be a violation, regardless of social distancing or face coverings. Chair Davis shared that there is a perception and rumors that perhaps there is a lack of interest and attention to finding violators.

Councilor Ballantyne confirmed that if a student tests positive, both undergraduate and graduate, whether they live on campus or off, they will be housed in the modular units on campus until they are determined to be recovered. Mr. Kress cautioned against rumors that may compromise privacy, particularly around HIPAA and sharing addresses.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handout:

- 200914 Situation Summary for City Council (with 209798)