



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Rodent Issues Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

6:00 PM

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 6:57 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Burnley, Clingan and Wilson), none against and none absent.

Others present:

Alicia Privett - Environmental Health Coordinator, Nick Antanavica – Superintendent of Inspectional Services, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

President Pineda Neufeld appointed Councilor Clingan to replace Councilor McLaughlin as a member of this committee for this meeting only.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [24-1471](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Rodent Issues Special Committee Meeting of September 30, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

Old Business

2. Order
(ID # [24-1276](#))

By Councilor Clingan, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Mbah and Councilor Sait

That the Directors of Constituent Services, Inspectional Services and Health and Human Services jointly prepare a written report for the next meeting of this Council's Special Committee on Rodent Issues, on the number of rodent complaints received from January 1, 2024 to date, including the information detailed within.

Councilor Clingan stated this item was completed to his satisfaction at the committee's September 30, 2024, however Superintendent Antanavica informed the committee that the presentation given at that time has since been updated, therefore, Coordinator Privett presented the updated information and noted that rat sighting reporting through 311 was comparable to the data from other communities. She noted that there are hot spots in East and West Somerville and around Lincoln Park. Chair Wilson asked about the Winter Hill hot spot and was informed that it is based on one site at Broadway and Dartmouth Street.

Coordinator Privett continued with the presentation, reviewing residential rodent assistance program visits, community site visits, rodent related violations, residential trash violations, overgrowth violations, and commercial trash violations. She also noted that communication efforts for 2025 include mailers, social media, rat walk (coming this summer), collaboration with SOIA on rat workshops and a re-filming of a PSA for local cable tv.

Coordinator Privett spoke about an ongoing rodent fertility control study using a product called Evolve, but she said that hard data of its effectiveness is not yet available. ISD is looking to expand the number of study sites and is seeking volunteers to assist in the pilot. Councilor Clingan asked if a presentation would be forthcoming for this pilot and Coordinator Privett said Cambridge is spearheading this and she would collaborate with them for additional information.

Superintendent Antanavica commented that the differences seen in the data are the result of having the ability to track occurrences, to re-vamping the rodent program by encouraging residents to report sightings and to the pro active actions of ISD. Chair Wilson commented that the fatigue factor, where residents get tired of reporting sightings, may have also led to a reduction in the number of reported sightings. Councilor Burnley asked how overgrowth affects the rodent population and Coordinator Privett said that it provides harborage to rats, as do vacant properties. Superintendent Antanavica reported that ISD is working on revisions to the city's vacant property ordinance and hopes to have it ready in a couple of weeks.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

New Business

3. Order
 (ID # [24-1516](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Sustainability and Environment invest in rodent proof composting barrels in the upcoming composting pilot program.

Coordinator Privett reported that there are no rodent proof bins available but some sort of locking container is being considered for use. Chair Wilson commented that the bins used by the company Garbage to Gardens hold up better than what the city is using.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

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4. Order
(ID # [25-0130](#))
- By Councilor Wilson, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Strezo, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Mbah and Councilor Sait
- That the Environmental Health Manager update this Council on the current policy regarding usage of Second Generation Anticoagulant Rodenticides (SGARs) and any plans to remove SGARs currently deployed in bait boxes in light of multiple recent birds of prey deaths apparently related to ingesting rat poison.
- Coordinator Privett continued with the presentation for item #24-1276 and reported that the city no longer uses SGARs and has taken steps to remove any that were in use. Chair Wilson asked if SGAR raptor deaths are happening on private property and Coordinator Privett replied that it's hard to determine where or how the poison was ingested. Councilor Burnley asked about the vitamin D product being used by the city in place of SGAR's and its ability to move up the food chain and Coordinator Privett explained that an excess amount of vitamin D in rats causes their organs to shut down and it has less chance of killing birds that have ingested rats with this product in them. Councilor Burnley stated that he has prepared an ordinance to ban the use of SGAR's in the city and he inquired whether ISD has a stance on banning them via ordinance. Superintendent Antanavica replied that there are several pieces of legislation moving through the state legislature and that the city has been preparing to enact a plan in the event that a full ban of SCAR's is implemented.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
5. Order
(ID # [25-0243](#))
- By Councilor Wilson
- That the Director of Communications and Community Engagement update this Council on efforts to educate the public about preventing conditions conducive to growth of the rodent population.
- Chair Wilson commented that this will be a standing item for the committee and will be taken up quarterly. The first update will be presented at the committee's March 17, 2025 meeting.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
6. Order
(ID # [25-0244](#))
- By Councilor Wilson
- That the Director of Inspectional Services update this Council on efforts around enforcement of rodent-related ordinances, including the number of complaints, inspections, warnings, and fines issued for vegetation and trash violations.
- Chair Wilson commented that this will be a standing item for the committee and will be taken up quarterly. The first update will be presented at the committee's March 17, 2025 meeting.
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RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

7. Order
 (ID # [25-0245](#))

By Councilor Wilson

That the Environmental Health Manager update this Council on rodent activity data and rodent mitigation efforts, including any novel approaches under consideration or being utilized.

Chair Wilson commented that this will be a standing item for the committee and will be taken up quarterly. The first update will be presented at the committee's March 17, 2025 meeting.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- Rodent Issues - 2025-02-19 Rodent Control Presentation (with 25-0244, 25-0245)