



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

### Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 8, 2025

6:30 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Ewen-Campen at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 7:02 pm on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, and Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 2 absent (Councilors Sait and McLaughlin).

Others present: Anne Gill - Director of Human Resources, Kimberley Hutter - Legislative Liaison, Shumeane Benford - Police Chief, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

#### Roll Call

**Present:** Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Judy Pineda Neufeld

**Absent:** Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin and Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1765](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee Meeting of December 2 2024.

**RESULT:** ACCEPTED

**AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

**ABSENT:** Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin and Ward Five City Councilor Sait

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1762](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Ryan Westgate to the position of Police Officer.

Chair Ewen-Campen opened the meeting by inquiring about the number of control officers that are budgeted and how many positions are currently filled for the year. Police Chief Benford confirmed that there are 78 filled positions. The Chair also raised a question regarding the hiring process for additional patrol officers, asking for an update on the status. Legislative Liaison Kimberley Hutter explained that while the candidates are still in process, they were unable to meet the Council's deadlines. However, the recruitment will continue moving forward. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about the timing of the next police academy, to which Police Chief Benford responded that it is scheduled for March. He added that the department can only reserve seats for candidates once they have reached a certain stage in

the investigation process, and the overall timeline for this process takes approximately one year.

Following this, Police Chief Benford introduced Ryan Westgate, a candidate for the police force. Westgate is a lifelong Somerville resident and graduated from Somerville High School in 2022. The Chief expressed his hope that Westgate, given his local background, would be able to connect with high school students and youth in the community. Westgate has been working toward becoming a police officer since his graduation and has returned to pursue this goal, eager to serve the city. Councilor Clingan asked Westgate about his previous work experience. Westgate shared that he had worked as a correctional officer at the Middlesex Correctional Facility, where he was deployed to multiple locations and typically worked with the inmate population. Chair Ewen-Campen asked what motivated Westgate to pursue a career in law enforcement and how he plans to work with equity in mind. Westgate responded that his family has a history of service in law enforcement, and in high school, he explored various training fields. He expressed his excitement about engaging with different types of people and his commitment to deescalating situations when needed. Westgate emphasized that he is eager to learn and approach each situation with an unbiased perspective, acknowledging that every individual is unique. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked Westgate what concerns him most and what challenges he sees in the community. Westgate explained that he worries about the unpredictability of how people might respond in different situations and the importance of being prepared to react appropriately. However, he also highlighted the strength of the Somerville community and expressed his desire to contribute to the ongoing positive work. Finally, Councilor Clingan then raised a question about the timeline from the health examination to this point in the hiring process and whether any infractions by a candidate would be monitored by the city. The Director of Human Resources (HR) explained that the process is a sequence of events that unfolds over a couple of months. As part of the application process, candidates are required to alert the city of any infractions, and if an arrest occurs, the Somerville Police Department should be notifying the city before the candidate can continue moving forward. In response, Councilor Clingan asked if there was a way for direct termination if such an incident were to occur. The Director of HR replied that every candidate is afforded due process, and each case would be handled differently. With clarification from the Police Chief, the Director of HR clarified that a candidate is considered an employee once they are in the academy. The Police Chief further added that while a candidate is in the academy, and even after they graduate, they

are on probation for a year. This probationary period provides the municipality with the flexibility to ensure that candidates meet the requirements to hold the position.

**RESULT:**        **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

**AYE:**            Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

**ABSENT:**        Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin and Ward Five City Councilor Sait