



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 10, 2020

REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Katjana Ballantyne	Chair	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	Vice Chair	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Absent	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	

The meeting was held in the Committee Room and was called to order by Chair Ballantyne at 6:01pm and adjourned at 7:48pm.

Others present: Annie Connor - Mayor's Office; Oliver Sellers-Garcia - OSE; Tori Antonino; Renee Scott; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees

The Chair announced that all of the items are on the agenda and organized by theme. She expressed an intent to spend time determining the priorities of the Committee members and the administration. Another priority is to sort out environment and sustainability issues with other groups such as the Office of Sustainability and Environment, SustainaVille, Climate Forward, and the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change and integrate the work, rather than possibly duplicating efforts. The Chair noted a further goal to take action on some of the ordinances before the Committee.

Chair Ballantyne will be working with the administration on the Native Species and Public Space Conservation ordinances. Councilor Scott shared an interest in LED lights, open space creation and field use and Councilor Mbah noted a concern about Brownfields. Councilor White would like to review previous drafts of the ordinances to continue the work toward refining and passing those. Mr. Sellers-Garcia added that Climate Forward and the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change would be delighted to share their work with the Committee.

Ms. Scott shared the priorities of the advocates, which focuses on native plants. She also expressed that the heat impact of turf and heat policy on playing fields are incredibly important. Other agenda items of interest are: Lincoln Park and understanding what went wrong; Dark Sky; stormwater retention; composting and waste reduction; native species pollinator garden; and the Public Space Conservation ordinance.

Approval of the December 4, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:

ACCEPTED

Ordinances

203365: That the City Solicitor draft an ordinance requiring native tree and plantings for all open space, to meet the goals of sustainability and biodiversity.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205683: Tori Antonino submitting comments re: #203365, calling for a native planting ordinance.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206495: That the City Solicitor consider the attached language in the drafting of a Native Tree and Plantings Ordinance, as ordered by #203365.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207999: 3 residents submitting comments re: #206495, the proposed native plant ordinance.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208567: Elizabeth Lundgren submitting comments re: #206495, the proposed native plant ordinance.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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203881: That the Administration draft a Dark Sky ordinance addressing applicability, color temperature standards, prescriptive or performance standards, DPW oversight, and exemptions.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207480: That the City Solicitor review the legal standing of each site identified in Sec. 12-131 of the proposed Public Space Conservation Ordinance to identify if there are any terms by which each site was acquired, or is held, that would prevent it from being dedicated to the public.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207884: That the City Solicitor draft an ordinance to ban the use of plastic flatware.

Chair Ballantyne shared the background of the ordinance to ban single-use plastic flatware and asked who the Committee should reach out to as a resource. Councilor Scott noted that the disability community is important for input, but he needs more time to review the information before offering any more suggestions. Councilors White and Mbah agreed. Councilor White added that input from the business community and information about what substitutes are available are important data points to understand. Mr. Sellers-Garcia and Ms. Connor noted that the intent could guide the Committee to different solutions and it would be helpful to understand that to shape the direction that the ordinance takes. Mr. Sellers-

Garcia added that if this could be included in another ordinance for simplicity, that would be worth considering. The small business community has also been subject to a string of changes (e.g. plastic bag ban, plastic straw ban), so he recommended considering their perspective as well. Chair Ballantyne noted that her goal would be to ban plastic completely, which there is precedent for at the federal level at the national seashores. She also expressed concern for compostable options due to the PFAS prevalence, and her preference would be for a natural solution.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Open Space and Parks

205437: That the Director of Parks and Open Space update this Board on all current parks projects.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

205709: That the Administration immediately pursue creation of a public fields and recreation area in the Inner Belt District pursuant to the Fields Master Plan.

Councilor Scott shared that this is an ideal location, and creating a fields complex could be undertaken quickly, rather than allowing the space to remain vacant for years awaiting development. The largest landowner in the area is the MBTA and this is an ideal time to engage in discussions with that entity. A domed facility could be an amazing investment or public-private partnership, as it would be among the only facilities of that type in the area. Ms. Connor noted that there is a capacity issue among the staff which is why it is contingent upon the completion of the planning processes for Assembly Square and Brickbottom.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

205710: That the Administration update this Board on the toxicity and availability of Conway Park's fields and playground, with a timeline for re-opening, in light of the significant impact on parents, children and child-care businesses in the city.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

205711: That the Administration present a Heat Island Impact Analysis on the proposed replacement of Conway Park's grass fields with artificial turf.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia noted that there is no established methodology for a heat impact analysis, so more information would be needed before this could be conducted. Councilor Scott shared that there have been recent heat island maps of the Boston area, including Somerville, that demonstrate the clustering around asphalt and artificial turf areas. He suggested that the administration explore working with the Urban Land Institute on the issue. Councilor Scott added that commercial development areas have been designed with a focus toward mitigating heat impact effects, and wondered what metrics were used by designers of those developments. Mr. Sellers-Garcia responded that the temperature analyses are generally more related to the needs of the buildings on the sites. Councilor Scott countered that the density of development in the City is such that there is a heat impact on sites, streetscapes, and abutting properties. An understanding of the tradeoffs and impacts of various materials is important for decision-making. Mr. Sellers-Garcia agreed that climate should be considered in all decision making and will explore this further.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207167: That the Director of SPCD share biannual CIP progress reports for all new open space and parks projects.

Chair Ballantyne asked Ms. Connor for more information on this request.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207173: That the Administration provide to this Board by its January 10, 2019 meeting a response to the attached petition of Foss Park stakeholders, which requests a schematic community design process and a plan for financing and managing the facility.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208232: That the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Commissioner of Public Works explore starting a monthly volunteer trash pickup day for the Dilboy DCR and Alewife Brook areas.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209139: Sasha Chanoff submitting comments re: re-turfing Dilboy Field.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209270: Parks and Recreation Director responding to #209152 re: Lincoln Park athletic field use, warranty, and quality control.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209358: That the City Solicitor draft an ordinance requiring the City to replace green space for those public spaces already dedicated to the public.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209441: That the Director of SPCD include the entirety of West Somerville Neighborhood School open space for renovation planning as discussed at a December 2018 community meeting.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209444: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Finance advise this Council, in writing, why, with an appropriation of \$9.3 million, the grass field at Lincoln Park was incorrectly installed the first time.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

209544: That the Director of Parks and Recreation discuss the impacts, updates and usage of Founders Rink being used for indoor soccer.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

209605: That the Director of SPCD provide this Council with the most recent updates on any plans for Foss Park.

Ms. Connor noted that there have been community planning meetings, and Chair Ballantyne asked for an update on the outcomes of those meetings, including items under both DCR and City purview. Councilor Scott also asked for more information about the plans for artificial turf as well as drainage. He is concerned that the materials will not allow for multi-sport use.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

209607: That the Director of SPCD provide this Council with a report on the history of Conway Park and what contaminant testing had been completed prior to its establishment as a public park.

Councilors White and Scott noted that it has been decades since the park was turned into a playing field and there is no knowledge of testing being performed. Ms. Connor noted that Ms. Pappenheim in the Law Department has been working with outside counsel and researching this history and will be able to provide a response to the Committee. Councilor White also noted that the statute of limitations runs from the time of discovery.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Brownfields

204968: That the Director of SPCD provide this Board with a list of all city owned parcels, indicating any brownfields, and any plans to remediate those sites and use them for housing.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Education and Outreach

206698: That the Director of SPCD establish an advisory service to help residents learn how to reduce storm water runoff, cool their yards and homes naturally, plant and preserve trees, reduce invasive species, and waive dumpster parking permit fees for households undertaking de-paving efforts.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

206745: That the Somerville Climate Coalition provide this Board with updates on their attempts to address climate change.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208042: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment inform this Council about New York City's "Climate Mobilization Act," which includes dramatic emission reductions for tall buildings, and explain which aspects could be adapted here.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208808: That the Administration update this Council on the Climate Preparedness Week Resolution (#208611) that was submitted in July.

RESULT: **WORK COMPLETED**

209614: That the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change discuss its 2020 plan with this Council's Committee on Open Space, Energy and Environment.

The Commission welcomes this invitation, and Mr. Sellers-Garcia will extend the invitation at the next meeting on Wednesday, with a likely date being in March.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

209624: That the Committee on Open Space, Environment and Energy provide feedback on the SomerVision 2040's chapters on 1) Public Space & Natural Environment and 2) Climate & Sustainability with respect to metrics, key tasks, and other strategies as noted within.

This will be discussed at the Committee's meeting scheduled for February 26, 2020.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Health

201857: That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Sustainability and Environment inform the Special Committee on Open Space, Environment and Energy which elements of the AMA's 2016 guidelines on LED lighting could be or have been used to minimize potential harmful effects.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

204434: That the Administration provide this Board's Special Committee on Open Space, Environment and Energy with an analysis of the attached communication regarding LED street lights.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

209612: That the Director of Parks and Recreation work with the Superintendent of Schools to develop a policy for "utilizing artificial turf in the heat" similar to the policy

used by Burlington, MA.

Chair Ballantyne clarified that this concept would involve actions such as notifying residents and teams when playing on turf would be dangerous due to heat.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209613: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment, the Director of SPCD, The Director of Communications, and the Commissioner of Public Works develop a plan for a "Resiliency Hub" when extreme weather events occur.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia expressed an interest in more information on what is driving this request in order to better respond. With the City being small in size, many of the Public Safety buildings already fill this role.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Procurement

204869: That Director of Sustainability and Environment include the School Department's Finance Director in discussions of #204436, to examine procurement criteria for cafeteria food and drink vendors given the amount of waste created by food packaging.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208614: That the Administration inform this City Council whether the new High School, and eventually other municipal buildings, will have dishwashing capacity, to reduce or eliminate reliance on single-use flatware and dishes.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209366: That the Director of Sustainability and the Environment work with the School District to provide any plans for shifting to compostable flatware.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Recycling

204436: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment arrange a meeting with this Board's Special Committee on Open Space, Environment and Energy, members of the School Committee, the Superintendent of Schools, the Administration, and the Commissioner of Public Works, to plan recycling efforts in the Public Schools.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Composting

202992: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment and the City Solicitor advise this Board on the feasibility requiring certain commercial and multi-family buildings to

require composting as a part of regular waste disposal.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208590: That the Administration revisit the proposal to institute citywide curbside composting.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Housing

207372: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment create a rental licensing program.

This relates to Climate Forward Action #2, Improving energy performance in existing buildings. Housing and ISD have been taking the lead on this. Mr. Sellers-Garcia suggested filtering the requests for information through the Mayor's Office.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Mobility

207373: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment develop an electric vehicle charging infrastructure program.

This relates to Climate Forward Action #4, Rapid transition to electric vehicles, and OSE is leading this effort and will provide updates. Mr. Sellers-Garcia noted that two new electric vehicle charging stations are planned.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207375: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment and the Director of SPCD improve and expand bicycle infrastructure around the city and report to this Board, quarterly, on progress made.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia noted that Mr. Rawson and his team are working on this effort. The annual progress report being released soon will include specific numbers related to bicycle lanes and other efforts.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Environment - Impacts on Roadway

209364: That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Sustainability and Environment discuss the safety uses and environmental impacts of the street salt used on the city's streets.

This was discussed in the Traffic and Parking Committee and Public Utilities and Public Works and there is a pilot underway in Ward 7 to use a truck with a liquid that would be a small percentage of salt mixed with water. The City plans to accept a donation of a brine machine and to purchase a new machine that can sense road temperature to ensure that salt is being spread effectively (when the road temperature is above 16 degrees).

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

209443: That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Health and Human Services discuss the city's road salting policy and residents' concerns about environmental impacts, health impacts and the expense of "over-salting."

Mr. Sellers-Garcia noted that the runoff is treated in the MWRA system, so the impact to human health is not a major issue.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

209546: That the Director of SPCD discuss what can be done to mitigate the flooding of Alewife Brook Parkway and Mystic Valley Parkway.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Urban Forestry and Gardens

207376: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment and the Director of SPCD formalize and implement a modern urban forestry management plan, including best practices and a resilient species list.

This relates to Climate Forward Action #6, Extended tree canopy, and the Urban Forestry team continues to work on this.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208920: That the Director of SPCD develop a plan to plant a native species pollinator garden along the Community Path.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Policies

208805: Affirming the federal Green New Deal resolution by establishing goals, identifying actions necessary to meet these goals, and calling for the federal government to enact policies to advance a Green New Deal.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Other

205665: That the Administration collaborate with MIT to build a robust biking infrastructure.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

205666: That the Administration investigate partnering with MIT to provide advice on

renewable energy sources.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia agreed with Councilor Mbah that we are lucky to have a wealth of resources in our city. The administration also has excellent staff resources and consultants that assist with projects, as well as residents who participate on Boards, Commissions and Task Forces. The City has been able to purchase an additional 16% local renewable energy.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206201: That the Director of SomerStat share an update on implementing a work order system for asset management, CRM requests, preventive maintenance, and related functions, for departments like Public Works, Engineering, and Urban Forestry.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207031: That the Chief of Police and the Chief Fire Engineer discuss the routing process and geo-locating capacity for 911 calls, especially calls from cell phones.

The Committee determined that this item should be referred to the Committee on Public Health and Public Safety.

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
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Handout:

- PlasticFlatware-1 (with 207884)