



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee

### Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, February 20, 2025**

**6:00 PM**

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Mbah and adjourned at 6:38 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Wilson, Burnley and Mbah), none against and 2 absent (Councilors Davis and Sait).

Others present:

Garrett Anderson - Residential Decarbonization Program Manager, Jill Lathan – Commissioner of Public Works, Residential Decarbonization Program Manager, Yasmine Raddassi – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

**Roll Call**

**Present:** City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr., City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson and Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis

**Absent:** Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

- 1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1768](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee Meeting of December 9, 2024.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

- 2. Order (ID # [24-0106](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Davis, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Sait, Councilor Mbah, Councilor Clingan and Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment work with this Council and Green and Open Somerville to develop a job description for an Invasive Species position to spearhead outreach, education, and citywide invasive plant species removal and to allocate funding for such a position in the FY 2025 budget.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

- 3. Officer's Communication (ID # [24-1552](#))

Director of Sustainability and Environment conveying an overview of the Commonwealth's Clean Energy Goals, Electric Sector Modernization Plan, demand growth in Somerville, and capital projects underway or planned.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

4. Order  
(ID # [25-0067](#))
- By Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Ewen-Campen  
That the Director of Parks and Recreation restore or replace the nearly 30 year old Nunziato Field plaque.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

5. Order  
(ID # [25-0070](#))
- By Councilor Wilson, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Mbah  
That the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment discuss with this Council plans to connect more households with the new incentives in the 2025-2027 Mass Save Plan.

Chair Mbah gave a brief overview of Mass Save. Program Manager Anderson informed the committee that the plan is set for final DPU authorization on Feb 28th. He spoke briefly about the benefits of heat pumps and reported that the city created a new position, City Energy Advisor, to assist residents with decarbonization. The Energy Advisor will also address the high rental population, bridging the gap between tenants and owners, and conducting letter campaigns targeting oil-heated homes and 2-3 family houses. Informational posters are being created for citywide display. Chair Mbah inquired about homeowner participation rates in Mass Save, but Program Manager Anderson stated that Mass Save does not share that data. Lastly, Program Manager Anderson noted that the city has joined Mass Save's Community First, which will help it to secure outreach funding.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

6. Order  
(ID # [25-0083](#))
- By Councilor Sait  
That the Commissioner of Public Works make a change to the calendar by extending the yard waste collection by at least one week.

Commissioner Lathan discussed the DPW's preparations for snow seasons, including repairing potholes and other seasonal concerns. She pointed out that yard waste collection starts in early April and runs through the first week of December, totaling seven months, which she feels is adequate time for residents to collect and dispose of yard waste, adding that any changes to the current schedule would require amending the contract with the hauler. Should more time be needed, she noted that residents may always drop off yard waste at the DPW yard.

Councilor Davis asked how extending the schedule impacts the DPW's in-house work, since yard waste pickup is contracted out. Commissioner Lathan explained that trash delays could affect their operations, prompting Councilor Davis to question the correlation between the two and stating that he disagreed with the notion that there is ample time for yard waste pickup. To that point, he emphasized that leaves continue to fall late in the year and he suggested adding an additional week to the schedule by delaying weekly pickups and extending the end date. Commissioner Lathan stated that while

this is possible, there might be complaints from those preferring an early April start of pick ups. Additionally, if there were storms in April or December, leaf bags might not be collected by the contractor. She went on to say that the DPW evaluates needs and weather patterns and is open to considering other options.

Councilor Wilson noted that not all residents have access to a vehicle for DPW drop-offs and asked if arrangements could be made for pickups. Commissioner Lathan responded by saying that DPW staff works with the Council on Aging to make such arrangements when necessary. Councilor Wilson also inquired about the benefits of leaving leaves on the ground for pollinators versus the risk of them becoming cover for rodents and the commissioner assured him that the DPW diligently picks up leaves around city buildings and schools. Councilor Burnley asked if the DPW is involved in the composting pilot and Commissioner Lathan confirmed that staff collaborates with the Office of Sustainability and Environment in a supportive role. Councilor Burnley raised the question because he's observed that some yard waste is compostable and that as the pilot program expands, it may reduce the amount of yard waste being discarded. Asked by Chair Mbah for her perspective on what is feasible, Commissioner Lathan expressed a willingness to adjust the pickup schedule and seek a compromise, committing to discussions with staff and contractors.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**