



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 2, 2024

7:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Pineda Neufeld at 7:00pm and adjourned at 8:07pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Burnley, McLaughlin, Pineda Neufeld), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Sait). Chair Pineda Neufeld noted that Councilor Sait was chairing another Committee meeting that was occurring at the same time as this meeting.

Others present: Anne Gill – Human Resources, Kimberley Hutter – Intergovernmental Affairs, Amanda Nagim-Williams – Racial and Social Justice, Chief Shumeane Benford – Police Department, Natasha Frazier – Assistant Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Judy Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah

Absent: Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1472](#))

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

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1620](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Amanda Nagim-Williams as Director of Racial and Social Justice.

Director Gill introduced the candidate, Director Nagim-Williams. Director Gill stated that Director Nagim-Williams has been with the Department since 2022 and was recently promoted. Councilor Mbah expressed his support for Director Nagim-Williams' candidacy and asked how her experience has prepared her for the challenges of this leadership role. Director Nagim-Williams shared that she has extensive experience supervising a variety of teams including task forces and implemented measures such as ensuring that task force members are compensated for their time. Director Nagim-Williams discussed her approach to meeting City goals and constituent needs.

Councilor Burnley asked how Director Nagim-Williams' experience in the legal field will help her in the Director role. She explained how her experience in law will help her in this role, and she also shared that her prior work has also focused on themes of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) as well as belonging, or "DEIB." She noted that the work at DSJ does is highly policy oriented, but that she would also like for the mission to be tangible to that members of the community know how to utilize RSJ. Councilor Burnley expressed support for the idea of more tangible events and noted how they have helped to build a sense of community. Councilor Burnley asked about Director Nagim-Williams' experience working as a Racial Equity Intern and what can be applied from that towards the Director role. She noted that she completed this internship as a law student and did research about best practices in engaging young people in DEI within the legal system.

Councilor Burnley asked how her experience building community in Intercultural Affairs can apply to this role. Director Nagim-Williams noted the importance of diversifying the methods in which people gather so that different perspectives can be heard. For instance, some people may prefer to meet in person, and others may prefer to meet virtually. She stated that she wants to bring more people in rather than exclude people out from RSJ's work.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked Director Nagim-Williams to share what she is most looking forward to and what challenges she anticipates. Director Nagim-Williams described challenges that she foresees, including ensure ongoing buy-in from stakeholders given that DSJ's work is not always visible in a tangible way. She also shared that she looks forward to letting the community know how they can utilize the RSJ Department.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor
 McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City
 Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

3. Mayor's Request Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Sean M. Sheehan to the
(ID # [24-1657](#)) position of Police Captain.

Chief Benford provided a general introduction for all three candidates being considered this evening, noting that they all passed the civil service exam and a competitive interview process. Regarding Lieutenant Sheehan, Chief Benford noted that Lieutenant Sheehan has over 23 years of service with SPD, has a law degree, worked for the Department of Defense, and has served in various supervisor and leadership roles.

Councilor Mbah noted that he was impressed with Lieutenant Sheehan's

resume and asked him about his experiences managing the community policing program and serving as an immigrant liaison. Lieutenant Sheehan described how these meetings were valuable for promoting transparency and reassuring community members, and that it was a positive program. Councilor Mbah noted his support for Lieutenant Sheehan's candidacy.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked Lieutenant Sheehan's to share his greatest highlight and challenge of working at SPD. He stated that as a supervisor for nearly 15 years in every department within the police department, observing the professional growth of officers has been rewarding. In terms of a challenge, he described how the police department has evolved to provide greater transparency and that this change was for the better but has been challenging to accomplish. Lieutenant Sheehan noted that when he was Accreditation Manager, he implemented the sharing of policies online. Lieutenant Sheehan stated that he most looks forward to attending community meetings.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin and City Councilor At Large Mbah

NAY: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-1658](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Paul Anderson to the position of Police Lieutenant.

Chief Benford introduced the candidate and shared his education and work history, noting that he has dual master's degrees in criminal justice and national security, has worked for SPD for eleven years, is an Army veteran, and oversees operational scheduling for SPD. He noted that in his current role, Sergeant Anderson served as a bridge between frontline officers and senior management. Sergeant Anderson shared that he was born and raised in Somerville, is going on twelve years at SPD, and always had the goal of becoming a police officer.

Councilor Mbah asked Sergeant Anderson to describe how he dealt with a challenging situation in the past. Sergeant Anderson described how his current role was challenging at first because it required new administrative skills which were different from being a patrol officer. However, he pursued education and training to learn these skills.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about the most significant highlight and challenge of his current job. Sergeant Anderson described how it is rewarding to be in a position to help people, earn trust, and build relationships. He stated that it is challenging when incidents occur locally, regionally, or nationally that undermine trust. He noted that SPD does not want to lose trust and has maintained a very good relationship with the

community.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor
McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City
Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

5. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-1661](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Juan Ducasse Ayala to the position of Police Sergeant.

Chief Benford introduced the candidate, noting that he was a B.A. in Criminal Justice and is bilingual in English and Spanish and that Spanish is his first language. He also noted that Officer Ducasse Ayala immigrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic.

Councilor Mbah asked how role as liaison in Assembly Square areas has informed his approach to building trust with residents and business owners. Officer Ducasse Ayala stated that his experiences working in the Assembly Square area have emphasized the importance of the Crisis Intervention Training program and that he has made an effort to connect people in need with counselors. He noted that these resources have helped businesses and the community as a whole.

Councilor Burnley asked about a training that Officer Ducasse Ayala completed called "Suicide by Cop: A Dangerous Reality." Officer Ducasse Ayala described the meaning of this concept and explained that the training emphasized de-escalation and distance. Councilor Burnley stated that he supports Officer Ducasse Ayala's candidacy.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked what Officer Ducasse Ayala is most looking forward to and what he believes will be a challenge. Officer Ducasse Ayala stated that he looks forward to serving the community and representing to the immigrant community that it is possible to become a police officer and rise in the ranks. He stated that challenges he foresees are the transition, employee relations, and exercising discipline.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor
McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City
Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait