

Madalyn Letellier

From: Nathanael Lintner [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, August 3, 2024 2:42 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Rat prevention public education proposal

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Full Name: Nathanael Lintner
Ward: 4
Address: [REDACTED], Somerville, MA 02145
Topic: Proposal for an ordinance and public education for rat mitigation.

Dear members of Somerville City Council and public,

I am a resident and voter in Somerville, MA (Ward 4).

Last February, I observed a portable sign on a residential street near Central Square in Cambridge. A photo is embedded in this email. If pictures can't be shared on this system, it says "Don't feed the birds, it attracts rats" in several languages and has a picture of a bird and a rat with a red circle and slash.

I believe a similar public education campaign would be useful for Somerville to reduce its rat issue. We have two neighbors who regularly throw bread to the birds. One also used to leave cat food out on the ground. I have regularly observed rats running to and from the locations where the neighbors put the bread at all hours of the day. Additionally, the birds cache the bread all over our property which in turn attracts rats directly to our property.

In 2021, myself and another member of the HOA contacted Somerville's rat control program requesting help and advice with the rats we were observing. The person who spoke with us from the City advised us that if a food source was present any other measures would likely be ineffective. We also asked our pest control provider, Green Planet for advice. Green Planet also advised that if a food source were present all other measures would be ineffective.

The person I talked to at the City as well as the city website in 2021 advised me to "talk to my neighbors" about the rat issue and food sources. I attempted to talk to the neighbors. I shared information from the city website about how food sources contribute to rat issues. The neighbors refused to change their practices and subsequently started leaving threatening notes on my car. The two neighbors continue to feed the birds to this day. I continue to find cached bread around our yard and building and see rats going to and from the feeding sites.

I request that the city pass an ordinance banning bird feeding unless it is with a bird feeder that is designed such that rats cannot access the feeder and it has a device to prevent the birdseed from being scattered on the ground.

I understand that such an ordinance would be difficult to enforce directly unless the issue was severe. I would propose that the ordinance would primarily be the basis for public education in which signage similar to what I observed in Cambridge could be posted in problem areas.

Thank you all for your time and consideration of this proposal.

Nathanael Lintner

