



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

August 17, 2020

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Lance L. Davis	Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Vice Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Absent	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Absent	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	

Councilors McLaughlin and Ballantyne were unable to attend due to planned travel and inaccessibility of internet.

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:01pm and adjourned at 8:24pm.

Others present: Mayor Curtatone; Annie Connor - Mayor's Office; Khushbu Webber - Mayor's Office; Doug Kress - HHS; Frank Wright - Law; Hannah Pappenheim - Law; Kristen Stelljes - SomerStat; Brianna Noonan - SomerStat; Nick Antanavica - Inspectional Services; Omar Boukili - Incident Commander; Rose Durham - Clerk of Committees; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees;

Tufts University Representatives: Rocco Dirico - Director of Government & Community Relations; Mary Jeka - General Counsel; Marie Caggiano - Medical Director; Gerard Coletta - Director of Public Safety; Kevin Kraft - Associate Dean of Students; Michael Jordan - Infectious Diseases Director

Approval of the July 13, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
----------------	-----------------

209798: That the Director of Health and Human Services appear before this Council with an update on measures to reduce the spread of the coronavirus and to support anyone who may become infected.

Councilor Niedergang shared a suggestion from a constituent that a public education campaign, including pictures of faces properly wearing masks and instructions about what wearing masks means, could be useful. Mr. Kress noted that there is a campaign around masks and social distancing being prepared, and the Tufts plan also includes educational information, including the use of student ambassadors. Mr. Kress has encouraged this to extend to the community in areas where students are known to gather.

Councilor Rossetti requested a weekly report on the conversations and updates from Tufts and Mr. Kress agreed that he can provide that. Councilor Rossetti also noted that there is an annual license renewal fee for businesses and wondered whether there was a discussion about temporary relief for the fees, as many small business owners are struggling. ***Councilor Rossetti moved that the administration consider relief for local small businesses as it relates to their annual renewal of licenses and associated fees. The motion was approved on a vote of 9 in favor (Scott, Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Niedergang, Mbah, Rossetti, Strezo, White, Davis) and 2 absent (McLaughlin, Ballantyne).*** Councilor White also noted that many restaurant businesses would like to continue outdoor seating beyond the current November 1 deadline and possibly add heating. Mr. Kress will work with ISD and Economic Development to evaluate what they can offer to small businesses. Chair Davis agreed that the response to the increased outdoor seating has been overwhelmingly positive and any extension, weather and safety permitting, would be welcomed. Councilor Rossetti urged collaboration with the Fire Department regarding what is safe for heating the spaces. ***Councilor White moved that the administration work with the City Council to administer a smooth transition for outdoor seating permits when they reach the City Council for renewal beyond November 1. The motion was approved on a vote of 9 in favor (Scott, Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Niedergang, Mbah, Rossetti, Strezo, White, Davis) and 2 absent (McLaughlin, Ballantyne).***

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

210428: That the Administration advise this Council as soon as possible, what oversight it will implement with Tufts University, following Tufts' decision to invite all undergraduate students back to campus for the fall 2020 semester.

Mayor Curtatone thanked Tufts for their collaboration during this pandemic and thanked the public for their continued efforts to drive Somerville's transmission rate down. He noted that reopening requires vigilance and preparation for a resurgence. Tufts offered resources to house infected emergency personnel and offered many campus assets, as well as sharing important advice with the City. When the plan to open campus was announced, it was data and science based, which is the focus of the City for each phase. Ensuring sustainability is important. As changing indicators and rapidly evolving best practices, as well as spikes occurring are evaluated, the Mayor, in conjunction with the Mayor of Medford, asked for reduced and staggered return to campus, as well as clarity around protocols and transportation plans. The population density in the city, and recent increase in the trend of cases in the state,

The Mayor is confident and has been assured by President Monaco that Tufts will continue to work with the City until the outstanding questions are sufficiently addressed. They will meet with the Health Directors in Medford and Somerville to answer questions related to testing, contact tracing, quarantine plans, and enforcement. Additionally, they will reduce the population, and will stagger the return to campus, as well as implementing and reporting on regular testing not just for students but employees in contact with students as well. These will be reported through a public dashboard on the University's website.

Further, Bus stops will be reevaluated, and the university will work with Police to monitor off-campus activity and ensure that there are no super-spreader events. The primary purpose is to ensure the health and safety of the community. Joint processes and procedures, including identifying indicators and developing public health responses, are being developed with Medford to best ensure compliance. If at any time it does not appear that Tufts is complying, or that any activity is endangering the health and safety of residents, the City will take further steps.

Chair Davis relayed a question from Councilor Ballantyne wondering if the City approved the Tufts re-opening plan. The Mayor noted that no final plan has been signed off and the City is still awaiting some answers. Chair Davis also noted that Phase 3 is on hold and the size of gatherings remains limited, and conformed that this will apply to Tufts as well. Councilor Rossetti expressed a concern about the turnaround time for test results and Mayor Curtatone noted that he shares the concern and the University should address that question. Councilor Rossetti also shared concern for the off-campus student population, noting that the testing requirements are less stringent and more difficult to enforce than for those on campus. Mayor Curtatone agreed, and noted that forcible mandates for testing should be addressed by the University. Councilor Rossetti shared that the groups of students without masks are not following the protocol and it is concerning. The Mayor noted that the mandate remains in effect and will be enforced, and Tufts should be an ambassador for this as well, and assist with messaging and engagement.

Councilor Scott noted that Somerville has used conservative and prudent judgment in decision making, and the practices for Tufts are not dissimilar from those at many universities around the country, and there are significant clusters that have led to the rollback of plans for having students on campuses. He wondered at what point Somerville will decide that University reopening is not safe. Mayor Curtatone noted that the City is being diligent, looking at a variety of indicators, and consulting with scientific experts. This is a complex issue and continues to evolve. Decisions may be rolled back if they are deemed unsafe at any time. Councilor Scott elaborated that this creates a hardship for students that are traveling from around the country. The Mayor added that there is no bright line. Violation of protocols resulting in clusters or spikes will be addressed if they arise. The approach is to remain informed and rely on experts and a variety of data sets.

Chair Davis asked what the continuing communication will look like. The Mayor noted that the coordinated response with the City of Medford will include regular meetings with Tufts, which are taking place weekly but may evolve to a more frequent schedule depending on the situation. The understanding of the protocols and indicators for decision making are informing the communication and interventions. This information will be shared with the community as it evolves.

Mr. Dirico emphasized that the health and safety of residents, students, and staff is the priority for Tufts and any concerns of neighbors will be addressed. A comprehensive reopening plan includes contact tracing, surveillance testing, quarantine and isolation procedures. The University has also reduced the on campus population by approximately 1,800 students. All students will be tested twice per week, with a less than 24 hour turnaround for results. There will be an isolation unit on campus for those testing positive, and space for quarantining will be available. Almost 1,000 tests have been completed and all have been negative. A team of student ambassadors will be handing out masks, and enforcement will be significant.

Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that the plan seems very safe on paper but the reality compared to the plan is a concern. He asked for more information about what the threshold is where Tufts will pull back and cease in-person learning, noting that the decision will be difficult to revert. Mr. Dirico shared that the indicators will be available on a public dashboard. Ms. Caggiano shared that Dr. Jordan has been working on a plan to identify early warning indicators. In addition to positive tests,

student behavior will be monitored constantly. Dr. Jordan shared a number of indicators that will inform both reopening and when things are not working correctly. Four key indicators include campus real-time varying reproduction rates (Rt); reported numbers of cases in Somerville and Medford; reported number of cases in the Commonwealth; isolation and quarantine capacity; and testing rapid turnaround time. The overall ability to provide PPE, ensure compliance to physical distancing, and absenteeism will also be monitored. The modeling data suggests that approximately 15 students may be infected when the returning out of region students are tested to get a baseline. The students will be tested multiple times, to ensure that they are not carrying the virus. Councilor Ewen-Campen emphasized that there should be a commitment on what the indicators need to be and that Tufts is willing to act based on scientific information and hold themselves accountable, including closing if needed for public health and safety. Dr. Jordan noted that there are de-escalation and closure metrics included in the protocols. An Rt of greater than 2.5 would indicate an epidemic warranting closure. As a comparison, the current Rt in MA is 0.8 and can be monitored at <https://rt.live/>.

Councilor Mbah asked about the testing protocol and Mr. Dirico conformed that it applies to employees as well. Student-facing employees will be tested twice per week and others will be tested once per week. Other employees will also work remotely if possible. Councilor Clingan asked whether the Broad Institute will be able to continue handling the testing in a timely manner, and Mr. Dirico noted that they are not taking outside clients, only institutions of higher education. Dr. Jordan added that their supply chain is a benefit of partnering with them, and they have sufficient supplies through at least the end of the year. Councilor Clingan asked as well what percentage of staff have been brought back, and Mr. Dirico clarified that no layoffs took place; dining workers were furloughed, as they usually are during the summer. Ms. Jeka added that the dining facilities will be providing grab-and-go food, but will also be delivering to students in quarantine. Councilor Clingan also wondered how many people would die if the Rt is allowed to reach 2.5 and Dr. Jordan noted that it is not generally deadly for students, and there is a policy for medically vulnerable individuals. Students must have three negative tests if they are coming from out of region and one if coming from in region before they are allowed to be out of quarantine, which will put them on par with any resident in the area. The 2.5 Rt is over time, but would equate to approximately 80-100 students at any given point in time. Councilor Clingan noted that this does not alleviate his concerns.

Councilor Strezo emphasized that there does not seem to be a process in place to shut down and vacate if necessary, and would like more information about a strategy and timeline. Dr. Jordan responded that the current status is yellow, and the goal is to remain there and respond to any indicators as needed before even approaching the orange or red zones. Mr. Dirico added that Tufts was among the first to close in the Spring and did so quickly and efficiently. The benefit of that experience and many students already learning remotely in the Fall will make the process easier if it is necessary. Councilor White asked if the initial testing will be self-administered, and Mr. Dirico clarified that those will be in-person and observed by EMTs. Ms. Caggiano added that observed self-collection references the individual swabbing their own nostrils, but under the guidance of an EMT. This helps minimize the amount of PPE that technicians need to use.

Councilor Rossetti asked about the students not returning to campus, confirming that 1,800 students will receive remote education, 140 of whom are first year students. This decision was made in June, when the option was given for all undergraduate and graduate students to be remote, and the Fletcher School would be 100% remote. Councilor Rossetti asked how many of those remote students reside in the area. Mr. Dirico noted that this report is due 45 days after the first day of classes (September 8). Students who are remote learning and never come to campus do not need to be tested. Councilor Rossetti shared an additional concern that many students may be bound by leases and living in the

area, even if they opted for remote learning, and the lack of testing is worrisome. Mr. Dirico noted that he will contact the Office of Residential Life to include any students who indicate they are living locally in the testing protocol. Councilor Rossetti also confirmed that students living together are considered a "family cohort" and are allowed to share a bathroom while under the travel quarantine, according to DPH. Chair Davis clarified that the plan is for the out of region students to return first and complete quarantine before the in region students return. He shared a concern that an out of region student returning to an apartment with other students already in place would pose a threat. Ms. Caggiano noted that the advice to students staying with anyone not required to quarantine is receiving instruction on how to remain in a separate bedroom, wear a mask in the house, access food delivery, and maintain cleanliness. Councilor Scott confirmed that testing has already started, and shared that there are students already disobeying the instructions and out without masks. Mr. Kraft added that most students arriving now are not from out of region. Ms. Caggiano also noted that the students who are not required to quarantine, (those that are traveling from states not included in the travel restrictions per the Governor's order) are still being tested.

Councilor Scott asked if any schools have started without seeing any significant clusters or outbreaks. Mr. Dirico responded that Boston University and Northeastern have begun moving in students and have not seen clusters like those at UNC. Councilor Scott noted that a partial week with a limited sample does not leave him optimistic.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

210460: That the Administration and the Traffic Commission cease all dedicated Tufts shuttle stops and remove all associated signage in Ward 6, particularly in Davis Square, without delay.

Chair Davis noted that the shuttle stops makes distancing impossible. Mr. Dirico commented that a possible solution under consideration includes making the shuttle point to point, rather than having multiple stops. The shuttles will also be operating at 50% capacity. Drivers will be tested and provided with PPE. The University will collaborate with the City to determine the best location for stops.

Ms. Webber shared that she is coordinating with Director Rawson and Mr. Dirico to explore potential locations for shuttle stop options, but none have yet been determined. Chair Davis added that these conversations should include private property owners, as locations such as parking lots may be good options.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

Handout:

- 200817 Situation Summary for City Council (with 209798)