



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 6, 2025

6:30 PM

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:31 pm by Chair Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 8:01 pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Clingan, McLaughlin and Ewen-Campen, none opposed, and one absent (Councilor Strezo).

Councilor Mbah arrived at 6:46 pm.

Others present: Stephen Cary - Planning Board Coordinator, Katherine Luster - Zoning Board of Appeals Coordinator, Shumeane Benford - Somerville Police Chief, Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

Present:	Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin and Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan
Absent:	Ward Three City Councilor Kristen Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Wilfred N. Mbah

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [25-1051](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee Meeting of June 4, 2025.

RESULT:	<u>ACCEPTED</u>
AYE:	Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah
ABSENT:	Ward Three City Councilor Strezo

2. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-1293](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Olivia Mobayed to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Katherine Luster, Zoning Board of Appeals Coordinator, introduced the candidate and noted that she had worked with the MBTA before. She highlighted the candidate's familiarity with public meetings and municipal decision-making processes, as well as her Master's degree in City Planning from the University of Pennsylvania.

Olivia Mobayed stated that she is a Senior Project Manager at the MBTA focusing on infrastructure planning and has worked there for about four and a half years. She shared that when she started at the MBTA, she wanted to live in Somerville, where she now rents and does not plan to move. She previously served on the Participatory Budgeting Board, found the

experience rewarding, and is looking for more opportunities to contribute to the City. Ms. Mobayed noted that she is aware of state Conflict of Interest rules and is not concerned about any issues arising from her position. Chair Ewen-Campen asked for her thoughts on public comments, and Ms. Mobayed said she believes they are important, even though those who participate are not always fully representative of the community. She emphasized the need to consider all feedback. Chair Ewen-Campen thanked her for her thoughtful response. Ms. Mobayed concluded by stating that she would take the position seriously and believes the Board will have thoughtful discussions.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Strezo

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1475](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Coralie Cooper to the Planning Board.

Stephen Cary, Planning Board Coordinator, explained that this appointment is for the alternate seat on the Planning Board. He noted that the candidate holds a degree in City Planning from MIT, previously served as Deputy Director for the Northeast States for Coordinated Air Use Management, and chaired the Clean Energy Future Committee in Arlington. He added that she would bring a valuable regional perspective to the Planning Board, along with expertise in transportation and climate policy.

Coralie Cooper shared that she has lived in Somerville for 15 years and looks forward to helping implement SomerVision 2040. Chair Ewen-Campen expressed enthusiasm for her qualifications and asked what she sees as the benefit of public comment. Ms. Cooper responded that public input is critical because it brings a diversity of opinions, and she emphasized the importance of outreach to encourage more participation, suggesting that offering after-work or weekend opportunities could help. When asked about the density of new development, Chair Ewen-Campen noted that residents often share strong opinions about projects being either too dense or not ambitious enough. Ms. Cooper said this underscores the value of public engagement, explaining that density can be increased thoughtfully and inclusively, and that adding density is an important way to expand housing at a time of great need. In response to a question from Councilor Mbah, she said the Green Line Extension has been a major advance for the city and that plans to expand bike lanes will better connect transit-oriented development with alternative modes of transportation, giving residents more opportunities to travel car-free. She also expressed that Somerville should be more walkable, with safer crosswalks and improved biking infrastructure. When Councilor McLaughlin asked how she would respond to a project proposing

more affordable housing than required, Ms. Cooper said she would view that positively, depending on the circumstances.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Strezo

4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-1488](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Richard Lavey Jr. to the position of Police Deputy Chief.

Somerville Police Chief Shumeane Benford shared that Deputy Lavey is currently serving in an acting capacity and has risen through the ranks, serving in every position within the department, most recently in the Criminal Investigation Division. Chief Benford described him as forward-thinking and innovative.

In response to a question from Councilor Mbah, Deputy Lavey said he is proud to be part of the team and hopes to strengthen the community policing unit. He highlighted several recent community engagement efforts, including outreach to children and speaking with eighth graders in three different languages at the request of a school principal. He emphasized his commitment to building community trust, noting that national sentiment toward ICE has created fear and mistrust among some minority residents. He added that the department is young and becoming more diverse, and that seeing officers in leadership who reflect the community helps foster stronger relationships and trust.

Councilor Mbah asked how he plans to ensure accountability within the department. Deputy Lavey emphasized the importance of authentic leadership and self-awareness, saying he understands his own strengths and weaknesses and strives to treat everyone fairly. He noted that he never asks anyone to do something he would not do himself and prioritizes building relationships both within the Police Department and with the broader community. He described the department's staff as its greatest asset. In response to a question from Chair Ewen-Campen about the biggest challenges facing the department, Deputy Lavey identified recruitment and retention as key concerns. He said the department is implementing an alternative hiring process and is focusing on recruiting younger officers, particularly from Generation Z, to help prepare the next generation of leaders.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Strezo

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1487](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Cassandra Campers to the position of Police Sergeant.
- Somerville Police Chief Shumeane Benford said that Officer Cassandra Campers brings 12 years of experience to the role. He noted that there are currently not many women in leadership positions within the department and emphasized that increasing equity and representation is a key priority.
- Councilor Mbah asked Officer Campers what leadership qualities she believes are most important. Officer Campers said that communication and approachability are essential, and she believes both her colleagues and members of the public see her as approachable. Chair Ewen-Campen asked what she sees as the biggest challenge in her new role. Officer Campers responded that transitioning to a supervisory position will be an adjustment, but she is ready to take on that challenge.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah
- ABSENT:** Ward Three City Councilor Strezo
6. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1486](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Patrick Canty to the position of Police Sergeant.
- Somerville Police Chief Shumeane Benford shared that Officer Patrick Canty has done outstanding work with marginalized communities, particularly with youth, and believes that his impact will only grow as he steps into this new role.
- In response to a question from Councilor Mbah about mentoring younger officers in community engagement, Officer Canty said he leads by example by showing up, listening, engaging in open dialogue, and answering questions. He emphasized that transparency is one of the most important aspects of building trust and hopes to demonstrate to newer officers that this approach is effective. In response to Chair Ewen-Campen's question, Officer Canty noted that transitioning from a peer to a supervisory role may present challenges, as he will need to evaluate the performance of those he previously worked alongside. He said it is important to separate personal and professional relationships and aims to offer constructive feedback without alienating his team.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah
- ABSENT:** Ward Three City Councilor Strezo

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7. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1485](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Jason Costa to the position of Police Sergeant.
- Somerville Police Chief Shumeane Benford shared that Detective Costa has served in challenging units and is known for his strong temperament and the respect he commands among his peers.
- In response to Chair Ewen-Campen, Detective Costa stated that his biggest challenge will be connecting with younger officers, but he is confident and ready to take it on.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah
- ABSENT:** Ward Three City Councilor Strezo
8. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1484](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Joseph Teves to the position of Police Sergeant.
- Somerville Police Chief Shumeane Benford said that Detective Joseph Teves is leading efforts on evidence modernization and he looks forward to Teves helping advance the department.
- Detective Teves emphasized the importance of maintaining open lines of communication between officers and the community. Chair Ewen-Campen asked Detective Teves about potential challenges in his new role. Detective Teves said that while he enjoys being hands-on and working alongside his partners, he will need to transition to delegating more. He noted that he often prefers to handle tasks independently, so his goal is to step back and delegate effectively.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah
- ABSENT:** Ward Three City Councilor Strezo
9. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1483](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Marc DiFava to the position of Police Lieutenant.
- Somerville Police Chief Shumeane Benford shared that Sergeant Marc DiFava has tremendous attention to detail and consistently applies best practices in policing.
- Councilor Mbah asked Sergeant DiFava about his approach to his new responsibilities. Sergeant DiFava said that with heightened responsibilities, he plans to focus on time management, particularly for administrative and
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operational tasks. When asked about his approach to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, he emphasized the need to build bridges to the community to foster stronger relationships and suggested becoming more active on social media to enhance engagement. Chair Ewen-Campen asked Sergeant DiFava what he sees as the main challenges in the new role. Sergeant DiFava said that managing his time efficiently and knowing when to delegate tasks will be critical, noting that he often prefers to handle many tasks himself.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Strezo

10. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1481](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Rico Isidoro to the position of Police Lieutenant.

Somerville Police Chief Shumeane Benford shared that Sergeant Rico Isidoro has successfully adapted to changes and new responsibilities, becoming proficient and knowledgeable in the areas where he was asked to grow. He noted that Sergeant Isidoro's colleagues regard him as a very strong commander.

Councilor Mbah asked about his approach to leadership. Sergeant Isidoro said he plans to treat officers with respect so they, in turn, treat the community with respect. He also highlighted his prior service with Homeland Security and Special Operations. In response to a question from Chair Ewen-Campen about interfacing with the federal government, Sergeant Isidoro clarified that it was not a federal task force. He noted that he helped secure grants for the city, including for ShotSpotter technology and other equipment, and worked with partners to respond to natural disasters and other emergencies.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Strezo

11. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1480](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Michael R. Perrone to the position of Police Captain.

Somerville Police Chief Shumeane Benford shared that Lieutenant Michael Perrone leads with compassion and will be an asset in motivating younger officers.

Lieutenant Perrone stated that he has worked with the department for 15

years and that Somerville is his hometown. In response to a question from Councilor Mbah about his long-term vision for police relations and accountability, he said that building trust and legitimacy is critical. He emphasized the importance of officer engagement with the community and expressed his commitment to being a true partner to residents. He also noted that the department must learn to do more with less, while remaining energetic and open to new ideas. When asked how he will measure success, Lieutenant Perrone said he gauges it by the community's level of engagement. He has observed that as officers build trust, the community becomes more involved in shaping the future of the department. He added that success also includes officers coming to work motivated and happy to serve.

Chair Ewen-Campen noted that the captain's role is public-facing and asked about potential challenges. Lieutenant Perrone identified hiring and retention as key challenges, which can strain other roles and resources. He said he has always been a problem solver and emphasized that maintaining trust and legitimacy will remain central to his approach.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Strezo