



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 17, 2021

REPORT OF THE RODENT ISSUES SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Vice Chair	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Absent	

Councilor-at-Large Mary Jo Rossetti was unable to attend this meeting due to a conflict with another meeting.

Others present: Khushbu Webber-Mayor's Office, Georgianna Silveira-HHS and Nick Antanavica-ISD.

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chairperson Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Approval of the October 27, 2020 Minutes

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

211213 - Directors of Health and Human Services and Inspectional Services conveying a Residential Rodent Control Assistance Program update.:

Ms. Silveira presented slides to update the committee on the rodent control assistance program. She stated there has been increased resident outreach and shared a copy of a post card to expand the program to include non-owner-occupied property. This information is also updated on the city's website. The basis is to promote the baiting program in the community and to target the rodents at the most vulnerable times. The slides also indicated the number of times residents called regarding rodents from 2019 to present. In 2019, the 311 calls were about three main hot spots on Oak Street in Ward 2, Union Square and the high school area. In 2020, the hot spot was just south of Tufts area. In 2021, there were 650 calls through May 8 for Ward 2 around the Argenziano School area and East Somerville.

Councilor McLaughlin has received a significant number of rodents calls in the past few weeks. He suggested the city step up the rodent program to reach more residents and flyer the Ward 1 area.

Chair Ewen-Campen stated this program is a good solution for those too afraid to talk to their landlords about rodents. He asked if the bait program has the necessary resources to provide all

the bait. Ms. Silveira stated the program is set up for 1000 requests and there have been 650 sign ups with each property getting two visits per property.

Mr. Antanavica stated the program has gone out to 20-25 houses and has a backlog of approximate 25 houses.

Chair Ewen-Campen asked for an update on the interdepartmental meetings. Ms. Silveira stated they have been meeting monthly public works, ISD, communications and engineering departments. Other departments join the meeting depending upon the items discussed. Chair Ewen-Campen also asked about the new inspector dedicated to rodent program. Mr. Antanavica stated there was a position that had not been filled for a while and once filled, they used the new person to work on the backlog for rodent control.

Chair Ewen-Campen received an email about rodents on construction sites and asked about work involving utility projects on streets. Ms. Silveira stated that she had been speaking with engineering about this item and where to place the rodent controls. She will continue to review possible locations for the fall.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

210381 - That the Director of Inspectional Services communicate with the community via mail, email and/or other means, its 2020 plan for combating rat infestations, including monthly updates during peak infestation periods and quarterly updates otherwise.:

Based on the discussion about the post card, this item was discussed in item number 2.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

209824 - That the Director of Communications utilize the CTY system, in April, to send out a high-alert to remind residents not to put out water or food for birds, as a method to help combat the rodent issue.:

Item number 2 discussion on the post card also addressed this item.

Councilor McLaughlin had a question about water basin. Ms. Silveira stated she will put information on the website about using rain barrels. She suggests residents monitor signs around the barrel and look inside for possible rodents. Additionally, she suggested to keep the rain barrels away from structures that may allow rodents to jump onto the barrels and consider putting a screen on the barrels. Councilor McLaughlin asked what a neighbor can do to address problems if the landowner does not handle the situation. Mr. Antanavica suggests residents call 311 to let the city know about this problem. There is also an ISD email address for new applications that is monitored on a regular basis isdrodentcontrol@somervillema.gov.

Chair Ewen-Campen also mentioned that Councilor Rossetti wanted to address an email that was sent by Ms. Wills with a complaint about a serious issue with a dumpster and rotted out tree. Mr. Antanavica stated they did receive the same email and will have an inspector out there to take the appropriate steps.

Chair Ewen-Campen suggested all residents keep an eye on the compost bins, as well.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

210745 - That the Commissioner of Public Works address the fragility of the trash collection bins in relation to the rat population and inform this Council as to the duration and nature of the contract providing said bins to the City.:

Ms. Silveira stated this was discussed at their last meeting. They are looking into ways to replace the barrels, to streamline ordering and monitor replacement, as well as, to monitor the contract.

Chair Ewen-Campen asked if the requests are being filled in a reasonable timeframe. Ms. Silveira stated they are filling the requests as quickly as possible.

Councilor McLaughlin stated there is definitely a backlog in replacing the trash barrels. The city cannot enforce the rule to ticket property owners if the city is unable to meet the demand of replacing the trash barrels.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Material:

- Rodent Committee 5-17_GSilveira Data Slides (with 211213)