



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 3, 2024

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Mbah at 6:01pm and adjourned at 7:05pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Scott, Wilson, Sait, Mbah), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Strezo).

Others present: Natasha Frazier – Assistant Clerk of Committees, Neha Singh – Director Intergovernmental Affairs, Emily Sullivan – Climate Change Program Manager, Susan Yerkes – Director of Parks and Recreation.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait and Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

Absent: City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo and City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [24-1384](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee Meeting of September 19, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo and City Councilor At Large Wilson

2. Order
(ID # [24-0042](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Davis and Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment provide this Council with any updated plans and timelines for a municipal composting program.

Councilor Wilson arrived at 6:34pm. Agenda item 4 was taken up with this item. Discussion for these items referred to a memo from the Mayor's Office of Sustainability and Environment, which is included as an attachment to this meeting. Chair Mbah asked who will be on the City's Commission on Energy Use and Climate ("CUECC"), and whether it will consist of technical experts or serve as a citizen advisory group. Manager Sullivan stated that it will be an internal task force comprised of City staff organized according to the five topic areas outlined in the Climate Forward Plan.

Chair Mbah asked about the vision for the CEUCC Commission. Manager

Sullivan stated that in addition to aligning representation on the Commission with the 5 topic areas outlined in the Climate Forward Plan, she also aims to expand Commission to incorporate different lived experiences beyond technical expertise alone. She also stated that an SPS representative will be on the Commission.

Chair Mbah asked about zoning and clean energy standards for new building construction and asked about how the City is evaluating it's progress so far as it moves forward into the next phase. Chair Mbah asked if mandatory code standards are proving effective. Manager Sullivan discussed the context of the Specialized Energy Code approval in 2019 and the role of incentives. She stated that the City is considering how to maintain the spirit of what Somerville wanted development to include in 2019 when the Zoning Ordinance was amended and updated, and is looking into incentive based opportunities.

Councilors commended the quality and thoroughness of the memo from OSE regarding composting and the Climate Forward Plan. Councilor Sait asked about the size of the Commission and why there is not more than one representative from SPS on the Commission. Manager Sullivan stated that the Commission is currently 7 members, and they aim to expand it to 10 to 12 members. Manager Sullivan stated that she can look into including more than one member from SPS. Councilor Sait stated that she would like to see more staff members and youth involved in climate issues at the local level. Councilor Sait asked about SPS building decarbonization, and Manager Sullivan discussed how SPS building decarbonization is not broken down to specifics in the roadmap because the purpose of the roadmap is higher level.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

3. Order
(ID # [24-1029](#))

By Councilor Mbah

That the Director of Parks and Recreation, the Director of SomerPromise and the Out of School Time Coordinator, report to the City Council on the status of children and teen participation in the summer recreation and education programs.

Agenda item 5 was taken up with this item. Discussion for these items referred to a memo and data from Parks and Recreation, which are included as attachments to this agenda item. Director Yerkes provided an overview of the memo. She stated that Parks and Recreation was able to offer more summer programs this summer than in the past and that they worked with SomerPromise to pull together another summer program in which 40 youth participated. She also stated that they introduced registration two weeks early to people who face language barriers and invited them come to the facility or register over the phone, along with people facing technology issues. She stated that translation is available on their website, in their brochures, and in their registration materials. Additionally, she stated that

there was a wait-list for all swim programs and that they will increase swim offerings next summer. She stated that survey response from families was positive overall. She noted that there are staffing issues for lifeguards.

Councilor Sait asked why family swim time is scheduled in the evenings. Director Yerkes stated this is because there is limited pool space and earlier family swim time would conflict with swim lessons that use the same space. Councilor Sait asked about the underlying reasons for staffing shortages. Director Yerkes described how age-appropriate staff are required to oversee teen programs, noting that teens cannot oversee teen programs, but that finding adults who are available to work part time from 2-7pm is challenging. They are looking into making these positions full-time roles that could attract and retain more candidates, but budget issues have prevented this from happening so far. They would like to see these positions become full time roles and are continuing to explore this possibility.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Order
(ID # [24-1198](#))

By Councilor Mbah

That the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment discuss with this Council the next steps for implementing the Climate Forward Plan.

This item was taken up with agenda item 2. Please refer to agenda item 2 for this item's minutes.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [24-1415](#))

By Councilor Sait and Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Director of Parks and Recreation provide this Council with the list of youth program offerings, their cap and their enrollment data in 2023 and 2024.

This item was taken up with agenda item 3. Please refer to agenda item 3 for this item's minutes.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- OSEE - 2024-10-03 Parks and Rec Memo (with 24-1029)
- OSEE - 2024-10-03 CF24 Composting Memo (with 24-0042, 24-1198)
- OSEE - 2024-10-03 2023 Program Caps and Registrations (with 24-1415)
- OSEE - 2024-10-03 2024 Program Caps and Registrations (with 24-1415)