



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Legislative Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

6:00 PM

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:03 pm by Chair Scott and adjourned at 7:53 pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Davis, Mbah, Ewen-Campen and Scott), none opposed, and one absent (Councilor Strezo).

Councilor Strezo arrived at 6:09 pm.

Also present: Yasmine Raddassi - Legislative Liaison, Maria Teresa Nagel - Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs Director, Shumeane Benford - Somerville Police Chief, Brendan Salisbury - Legislative and Policy Analyst, Cindy Amara - City Solicitor and Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

Present:	Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis, City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen and Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott
Absent:	City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [26-0859](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Legislative Matters Committee Meeting of May 5, 2026.

RESULT:	<u>ACCEPTED</u>
AYE:	Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

2. Committee Minutes (ID # [26-0855](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Legislative Matters Committee Meeting of April 28, 2026.

RESULT:	<u>ACCEPTED</u>
AYE:	Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

3. Ordinance
(ID # [26-0522](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Link, Councilor Hardt, Councilor Scott and Councilor Clingan

Proposing an amendment to Section 2-6 of the Code of Ordinances, the Welcoming Communities Ordinance, to further enhance civil rights protections in Somerville.

Councilor Ewen-Campen invited Gideon Epstein, Counsel for the ACLU of Massachusetts, to provide introductory remarks on the amendments and the role municipalities can play in protecting immigrants' rights and civil liberties. Counsel Epstein described the amendments as some of the most consequential actions local governments can take to safeguard immigrant communities and highlighted provisions requiring City lawyers to review existing and future City contracts, particularly those involving surveillance technology and data-sharing practices. He referenced concerns around companies such as Flock Safety sharing license plate reader data with ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and other agencies involved in civil immigration enforcement, noting that Somerville has not participated in these types of data-sharing networks and that the amendments would codify those protections into law while strengthening safeguards around information sharing and First Amendment rights.

Councilor Scott noted that the ordinance was developed collaboratively with Councilors Link and Hardt and the Administration, and reviewed the attachment, *Amending Section 2-6 Welcoming Community Ordinance*, highlighting Sections 3 and 13. Legislative Liaison Yasmine Raddassi stated that the ordinance reflects the City's shared values. Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs (SOIA) Director Maria Teresa Nagel shared that SOIA has worked with the Law Department to distribute signage informing businesses and private property owners of their rights regarding ICE access without a warrant, while continuing "know your rights" trainings for community members and City staff. Director Nagel added that SOIA supports accountability by providing staff with clear guidance on their responsibilities and remaining regularly available for trainings and follow-up support. She also noted ongoing coordination with the Police Department to ensure residents understand the distinction between local police and federal immigration agents. Councilor Mbah expressed appreciation for the effort and asked about oversight and accountability measures. Chair Scott and Liaison Raddassi noted that the ordinance largely reinforces existing City practices and that ongoing oversight and training will remain important. Somerville Police Chief Shumeane Benford stated that the Police Department has implemented regular trainings and designated leadership contacts, including Deputy Chief Donovan and Captain De Oliveira, to ensure officers remain informed and in compliance with the ordinance.

Councilor Strezo proposed explicitly adding "places of worship" to Section 13(B)(II), which Councilor Ewen-Campen was in support of, though Legislative and Policy Analyst Brendan Salisbury, Director Nagel, and City Solicitor Cindy Amara advised that the ordinance's protections already

apply broadly and that referencing specific locations could unintentionally narrow its scope. Councilor Davis raised questions regarding wording in Sections 13(B)(I), E(3), and E(4), including whether phrases such as “without limitation” should be added for clarity and whether references to federal law or court orders were redundant. Salisbury and Solicitor Amara stated that the City’s drafting style generally favors concise language and that “including” is not considered restrictive, while Liaison Raddassi explained that certain references were intentionally repeated for clarity in sections specifically related to civil immigration enforcement. Councilor Mbah suggested stronger civilian oversight measures in Sections F, G, and H, while Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that portions of the ordinance were modeled after prior ordinances, including the City’s facial recognition ordinance. Councilor Davis also questioned the use of the term “court order” rather than “administrative warrant,” to which Solicitor Amara responded that the distinction was not legally concerning because administrative warrants are executed by officers rather than issued by courts.

Councilor Davis moved to request the Policy Analyst and Law Department remove the remaining uses of “without limitation” elsewhere in the document to remain consistent. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Davis, Ewen-Campen, Strezo and Scott), 0 opposed and 1 absent (Councilor Mbah).

Councilor Ewen-Campen moved to request the Policy Analyst and Law Department include “religious expression” after “assembly” in 13(B)(I) in the resubmission to the Council. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Davis, Mbah Ewen-Campen, Strezo and Scott), 0 opposed.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-1822](#))

Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Chapter 7 of the Code of Ordinances to establish a Rental Registry and Energy Disclosure.

Chair Davis noted that the ordinance had originally been filed by the previous administration. Legislative Liaison Yasmine Raddassi stated that the current administration supports the policy but is not yet prepared to discuss implementation details, noting that additional clarity would come following the budget process to ensure a department is identified to oversee and enforce the ordinance. Councilor Davis emphasized that the matter is of significant public interest.

Chair Scott acknowledged broader concerns regarding ordinances being passed without clear enforcement mechanisms, but stated that the passage of ordinances remains an important function of the City Council in establishing policy direction and delegating enforcement responsibilities to the Administration. Councilor Ewen-Campen expressed support for the

ordinance and emphasized the urgency of the issue, while Councilor Mbah concurred, describing the proposal as a “win-win” situation that would not require a significant administrative burden.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE