



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

7:00 PM

This meeting was held in the Committee Room and virtually via Zoom, was called to order at 7:02 pm by Chair Strezo, and adjourned at 8:30 pm with a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld and Strezo), none opposed, and one absent (Councilor Clingan). (Councilor Clingan joined the meeting at 7:27pm and left the meeting at 8:25pm)

Others present: Jill Lathan - DPW Commissioner, Demetrios Vidalis - Director of Water and Sewer - Kimberly Hutter - Legislative Liaison, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Judy Pineda Neufeld
Absent: Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1385](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations Committee Meeting of September 19, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

2. Order (ID # [24-1396](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Sait That the Director of Health and Human Services discuss with this Council the findings from the recent U.S. Surgeon General Advisory on the Mental Health and Well-Being of Parents and its recommendations to better support parents and caregivers.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld introduced this item highlighting how the report attached to tonight's meeting entitled *Equity - 2024-12-10 Parents Under Pressure Report (with 24-1396)* focuses on policy recommendations to maintain a family friendly reputation within the city. Chair Strezo read from the report highlighting multiple mental health factors and recommendations. Chair Strezo stressed the lack of childcare present in the city and the way it impacts families' lives. Legislative Liaison Kimberly Hutter added to the conversation that a recent full policy analysis has been done for Somerpromise and continued efforts to work with the various stakeholders in the city to implement any recommendations remains a commitment to the administration. Councilor Pineda Neufeld added in that this item is larger

than just schools and should be looked at more holistically and include private care and schooling options as well.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

3. Order
(ID # [24-1262](#))

By Councilor Strezo
That the Director of Health and Human Services provide an update on the availability of free menstrual products in all city owned bathrooms.

Chair Strezo read from the attached memo entitled *Equity - 2024-12-10 HHS Memo (with 24-1262)* which provides an update on the implementation of menstrual products into city bathrooms.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Resolution
(ID # [24-1183](#))

By Councilor Strezo, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Mbah, Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Clingan

That the Administration install diaper changing stations in both restrooms on the second floor of City Hall.

Commissioner Jill Lathan shared these items have been ordered and are waiting for them to be delivered and will then be installed.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Resolution
(ID # [24-1033](#))

By Councilor Strezo
That the Director of the Somerville Housing Authority discuss the Family Self Sufficiency Program, which assists public housing residents to reach financial goals, and how to expand its purpose, presence and usage.

Chair Strezo shared thoughts on wanting to have a more robust conversation in the new year with the Director and the possible ways in which the Family Self Sufficiency Program could be an asset to the city's residents.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [24-1614](#))

Conveying an update on water and sewer rate restructuring.

Dave Fox from Raftelis Consulting presented an update on water and sewer rate structures, focusing on equity and fairness for residents, through a report

entitled *Equity - 2024-12-10 Water&Sewer Update (with 24-1614)*. Discussions included potential stormwater fees, gathering data related to impervious ground, credit programs, resource for residents to calculate their bills, and ensuring accurate billing following rate changes. An Open House in October provided residents with information on Water and Sewer operations and upcoming rate changes.

Water and Sewer Director Demetrios Vidalis detailed the updates from the report, including plans to offer credit programs for seniors and those with accessibility needs. There is ongoing development of a resource for residents to estimate their bills and a process for gathering impervious surface data using aerial photos and GPS.

Council members raised concerns about the appeals process, which is still being developed, and how the rate changes will impact public housing and small businesses. The contractor emphasized that a full statistical analysis will be done before implementing fixed rates.

In conclusion, Raftelis outlined next steps: addressing data integrity, ensuring accurate billing systems, and continuing community outreach, with the goal of fully implementing the plan by FY 2026.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Resolution
(ID # [24-0717](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson

That the Administration address its plan to prevent displacement in relation to water and sewer bills.

This item was discussed with ID # 24-1614.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [24-0674](#))

Conveying an update on the development of a water bill ratepayer assistance program.

This item was discussed with ID # 24-1614.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- Equity - 2024-12-10 HHS Memo (with 24-1262)
- Equity - 2024-12-10 HHS Memo (with 24-1396) Revised
- Equity - 2024-12-10 Water&Sewer Update (with 24-1614)
- Equity - 2024-12-10 Parents Under Pressure Report (with 24-1396)