



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Rodent Issues Special Committee

### Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday, May 14, 2024**

**6:00 PM**

Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, this meeting of a City Council Committee will be conducted via remote participation. We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the City of Somerville website and local cable access government channels.

Copy & paste the following link into your internet browser to view this meeting live:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/>

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#### Roll Call

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Present:</b> | Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan and City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson |
| <b>Absent:</b>  | Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin                                     |

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0252](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Rodent Issues Special Committee Meeting of February 27, 2024.

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|----------------|---|
| <b>RESULT:</b> | <b><u>ACCEPTED</u></b>  |
| <b>AYE:</b>    | Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson |
| <b>ABSENT:</b> | Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin                                  |

2. Order (ID # [24-0663](#)) By Councilor Clingan  
That the Environmental Health Coordinator appear before the Special Committee on Rodent Issues to present the 2024 Integrated Pest Management Plan.

Manager Zeigler gave a presentation recapping the City's efforts to mitigate rodent issues to date and provided an update regarding the City's 2024 Integrated Pest Management Plan ("IPM"). The full presentation is available to the public as an attachment to this meeting.

Manager Zeigler, Chair Clingan, and Councilor Wilson discussed multiple strategies for rodent mitigation throughout the meeting. One of the initial

topics discussed by Manager Zeigler during his presentation was the 311 rat reporting program. Manager Zeigler provided an overview of reporting trends. He also described several changes to the program over the past several years, including how calls are routed and responded to. Manager Zeigler also provided an update on the Residential Rodent Assistant Program requests and described why the City has seen these changes over time following a question from Chair Clingan.

Manager Zeigler emphasized how helpful rodent academies are for the City, since they provide ample opportunities for learning and collaboration regarding strategies for rodent control. One trend among cities, including Somerville, is a wider radius of rat infestations following restaurant closings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Manager Zeigler emphasized that trash collection is a major factor contributing to rodent issues.

Councilor Wilson commented that snap traps have been effective in his personal experiences doing rodent control, as well as composting. Manager Zeigler encouraged residents to contact the City regarding effective snap trap use. Manager Zeigler described how commercial and residential trash collection issues drive rodent infestations, and commercial trash violations have the greatest impact. He discussed how the City is going to focus more on commercial trash violations. Councilor Wilson inquired as to whether there is an education element that precedes enforcement to help ensure compliance before fining occurs. Manager Zeigler stated he will bring this suggestion to ISD's attention.

The importance of communication was emphasized throughout the meeting for the purposes of informing community members about resources that are available to them and their neighborhoods through ISD. Councilor Wilson emphasized strategic communication with community members in neighborhoods that are rodent infestation hotspots, including signage and video production as suggestions for communication modalities. Manager Zeigler stated his office is exploring how to make a more engaging PSA. Chair Clingan suggested having a community event dedicated to rodent issues with tabling from relevant offices and organizations to connect the community with resources. He also sought clarity on the degree to which 311 responders are available to answer questions by community members when they respond to reports.

Manager Zeigler stated that community site visits are an important resource available to the community. During these visits, a walk-through inspection is done that involves multiple neighbors. He stated that neighborhoods that participate in this program see much greater results over time. Councilor Wilson asked how the City can inform the public that these site visits exist, and Manager Zeigler stated they are looking to improve the communications on this resource. Councilor Wilson suggested considering tailoring communication to landlords/homeowners and tenants separately about what

options are available to each of them for rodent mitigation.

Councilor Wilson inquired about rodent hormonal birth control and carbon monoxide as two additional mitigation strategies. Manager Zeigler stated that the City's birth control program is a pilot program that will utilize a rodent birth control called Evolve. The City will work closely with Cambridge on this to do a controlled study. He stated that the timeline for this study is not yet determined. He also stated that carbon monoxide pumps are available for qualified properties through the residential assistance program, and that members of the public interested in this should consult with the City inspectors and contractors. There was also discussion of New York City as an impressive example of rodent mitigation.

The remainder of the meeting focused on the details of the City's 2024 Integrated Pest Management (IPM) update. Manager Zeigler explained the purpose and structure of the IPM through the lenses of residential, commercial, and public categories. He stated that "public" property means City owned property.

There were additional suggestions by the Chair Clingan and Councilor Wilson for rodent mitigation. A member of the public, Toby Woll, spoke in support of Councilor Wilson's recommendation for curbside composting. Ms. Woll stated that she is involved in composting advocacy in Somerville and asked what she can do to increase curbside composting in the city, which is effective in diverting rats.

Councilor Clingan stated that he has seen colleagues on the City Council try to get curbside composting in the City since 2016. He stated that 60% of the city is renters. He noted that he is included in the renter population, and that it can be difficult to get buy-in from renters. He stated that landlords should be required to participate in curbside composting. Manager Zeigler emphasized that correctly diverting waste is the most effective practice in rodent mitigation.

Councilor Wilson stated that he is one of several councilors who has advocated for composting and suggested looking to Cambridge and Boston's "garbage to gardens" program as an example. He stated that the City Council has been pushing for curbside composting for a decade. He also stated that there is not anything concrete in the upcoming fiscal-year 2025 budget regarding curbside composting, but hopes to see curbside composting in the fiscal-year 2026 budget. He also suggested doing a curbside composting pilot program, in which the 311 reporting map could be used to identify a neighborhood heavily impacted by rodent issues, and a before and after comparison of reporting could be done following implementation of curbside composting.

Ms. Woll stated that approximately 10% of the City are garbage to garden

subscribers, and that this number is actually higher than 10% because of shared bins among neighbors. She stated that this is an opt-in service rather than a required program, and that there has been an overwhelmingly positive response from the communities in which it has been offered using the opt-in model. This program exists in Medford, Watertown, Arlington, and Cambridge. Chair Clingan expressed support for identifying a neighborhood for a pilot composting program.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**