



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

July 28, 2011

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
William A. White Jr.	Chair	Present	
John M Connolly	Vice Chair	Present	
Walter F. Pero	Ward Four Alderman	Present	
Bruce M. Desmond	Alderman At Large	Present	
Maryann M. Heuston	Ward Two Alderman	Present	
William M. Roche	Ward One Alderman	Present	
Dennis M. Sullivan	Alderman At Large	Present	
Omar Boukili	Administrative Assistant	Present	
Paulette Renault-Caragianes	Director of Health	Present	
Ellen Schneider	OSPCD	Present	
Eddie Nuzzo	Supt. of Inspectional Services	Present	
Robert Corrigan	Consultant	Present	

- Rodent control

Mr. Corrigan, one of the nation's leading experts in the field of urban rodents, gave a presentation on the Behavior and Ecology of the City Rat. Mr. Corrigan told the audience that the rat is the third most successful mammal on earth, surpassed only by mice and humans. Rats are intelligent, diabolically clever, don't see well and use their whiskers to transmit messages to their brain. Humans underestimate other mammals, so efforts to eradicate rats should be considered an all out war and all resources, including cooperation from public agencies, need to be utilized. Rats are gnawing mammals and are capable of grinding material down, e.g., wires, soap and plastic. They are opportunists, they are linear, they are capable of flattening their bodies to fit through gaps of ½ inch and they are everywhere. An ounce of food is all that is required for a rat to maintain proper health, therefore, a 10 pound trash bag of food could feed an enormous amount of rats. Some rats will eat bait that has been set out, while others won't go near it and they will not eat compost unless it contains food scraps. Most rats live from 6 to 12 months, can swim for 72 hours without rest and can transmit 55 diseases.

Mr. Corrigan said the largest rat was 1 ½ pounds, found in Missouri, and he debunked the myth that rats can be 2 pounds or larger. Somerville has brown rats, not the black rat (which doesn't do well in the eastern U.S.). Rats originated in Mongolia and got to this country via ship. The city of Boston had a severe rat problem centuries ago and exterminated 8,418 of them in 1741.

Mr. Corrigan told the audience that baiting and setting traps won't get the job done. Rats can be eradicated by cleaning up and removing food sources, since rats will kill each other when food supplies shrink. The public needs to be aware of the surroundings, looking for things that rats prefer, i.e., holes, lines, corners, slopes and shadows.

The city is educating the public on the problem with various public information campaigns and anyone having a problem with rats should call 311 so that an inspection of the area may be performed. Ms. Schneider noted that inspectors have to be invited onto private property for an adequate inspection to be performed.

Chairman White requested that the Inspectional Services Department respond to complaints received about rats near the West Branch Library.