



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Legislative Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and in person in the Committee Room and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:05 pm and adjourned at 7:03 pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Strezo, Mbah, Ewen-Campen, Scott, Davis), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Others present: Jason Piques - Assistant City Solicitor, Meredith Stivers - Assistant City Solicitor, Brendan Salisbury - Legislative and Policy Analyst, Brad Rawson - Directory of Mobility, Yasmine Raddassi - Legislative Liaison, Amara Anosike - Chief of Staff and Strategy for Somerville Public Schools, Stanley Vieira - Somerville Public Schools, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

Roll Call

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

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0783](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Legislative Matters Committee Meeting of April 15, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Mbah and City Councilor At Large Strezo

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0566](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Chapter 12, Article VI of the Code of Ordinances to modify the Tree Preservation Ordinance.

Policy Analyst Salisbury presented changes to the document, *Legislative Matters - 2025-04-29 - Amending Ch. 12 Art. VI Tree Preservation (with 25-0566)*, with revisions highlighted in yellow. Analyst Salisbury clarified the distinction between two key terms: diameter at breast height, which refers to the measurement of a tree being removed, and caliber height, which refers to the measurement of newly planted trees. Analyst Salisbury also addressed Section 12-113 in the Enforcement section, noting that the first highlighted change involved the restoration of text that had been unintentionally deleted in the initial submission.

Following the presentation, Councilor Scott inquired about the enforcement

mechanism for a Stop Work Order, in relation to violations involving tree removal without prior authorization which is detailed in Section 12-113 b(4). Analyst Salisbury suggested that language could be added to this section to address such violations, though this would require confirmation from the law office regarding its legality. Assistant City Solicitor Stivers indicated that adding language to Section 12-113 b would likely be permissible. Chair Davis shared that the existing language already implies that non-compliance constitutes a violation, but he expressed openness to amending the language if necessary. Analyst Salisbury also provided further clarification on Section 12-113(c), specifically regarding the language around offenders in the event of a violation. The intention was to refine and narrow the definition of offender, as previous discussions had highlighted the term as too broad, following those discussions it was decided that changing the language narrows the use case of what offender means.

Chair Davis moved to amend Section 12-113(b)(7): failure to comply with a stop work order.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED AS AMENDED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Mbah and City Councilor At Large Strezo

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0838](#)) Requesting approval of the Surveillance Technology Impact Report for Hudl Focus cameras.

Chair Davis opened the discussion by sharing context around the access that high school students will have to recordings and data from the Hudl cameras, which is view only access. A submitted report included the requested edits for approval. Chair Davis also highlighted a memo update clarifying that while Hudl cameras have the capability to capture audio, the audio feature will be disabled in the gymnasium setup. Access to the footage will be tiered, with coaches and administrative personnel having full access, while students will only have view-only access. Director Viera mentioned the possibility of adding a remote camera at Dilboy Field, though the goal at this stage is to review the use of the cameras before implementing them in more areas.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Mbah and City Councilor At Large Strezo

4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-0781](#))

Requesting approval of a Home Rule Petition to authorize the City of Somerville to employ automated enforcement of certain traffic violations.

Director Rawson outlined several key topics addressed in the HRP. The first focused on the types of moving violations that could be enforced by camera systems, which include speeding, red light violations, right-turn violations on red, and blocking intersections. These all align with Senate legislation. Where camera enforcement could take place, enforcement would be allowed on municipal roadways and eligible state roads, pending approval by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The Governor's Bill suggests a limit of one camera per 5,000 residents, capping Somerville at 16 cameras. However, there is no recommendation to limit the number of cameras in the city under the HRP and Director Rawson shared he does not feel good about capping the number of cameras available to be deployed.

The second topic discussed was how the cameras would operate. The cameras will only capture images when an infraction occurs, and these images will be preserved only until the end of a case, then they must be destroyed within 48 hours. The cameras are prohibited from capturing frontal images, and images that could identify the operator's face are specifically prohibited. Additionally, vendors involved in the system cannot generate revenue, any revenue would solely be used to cover system costs.

The third area of focus was the education and notification process before camera deployment. The HRP differs from the Governor's and Senate bills in that it would not require prior approval from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation(DOT). Instead, it would require formal notification, a public hearing, and a city council vote. The HRP also includes a 60-day public information campaign and mandates physical signage to notify the public. Additionally, written warnings would be issued prior to monetary fines, and the HRP provides more flexibility than the Senate and Governor's versions, as it does not require a warning for a first offense. The Senate and Governor's bills, however, would offer a trial period with warnings issued for the first six months. While the HRP does not require an annual report, the Senate and Governor's versions do.

Director Rawson also addressed the penalties for violations under the HRP.

The first violation could result in a monetary fine under the HRP, while the Senate and Governor's bills would only issue warnings for first offenses. The HRP recommends using the Chapter 90 framework for speeding fines, which are generally higher than those in the Governor's and Senate bills. Additionally, none of the proposed bills would result in notifications to insurance companies, but all would require notification to the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV). All three proposals would include a 60-day window for objecting to a citation.

Chair Davis raised a question about whether the HRP's administrative aspect would be subject to the city's technology ordinance, which mandates an impact report and an annual report. Assistant Solicitor Piques confirmed that this would need further investigation to ensure no exemptions exist. Chair Davis also inquired about how photos of violations would be captured and who would make the determination of a violation. Director Rawson mentioned that further follow-up on safety concerns might be needed in a future meeting. Councilor Strezo and Councilor Mbah expressed concerns about how the fines and citations in the HRP address equity within the community. Councilor Strezo pushed for clearer communication on what constitutes a violation, while Liaison Ridassi stated that the HRP's fines would not exceed the state's fine system currently in place and that the HRP as written is more flexible to allow for written notices. Councilor Mbah asked about the targeted stakeholders for this program, whether it is aimed at residents or pass-through drivers. Director Rawson responded that the goal is to improve safety on the streets, especially for residents and workers, through tools like this system. However, the methodology for the public campaign is still under development, and input from peer cities with more advanced programs will be incorporated. Councilor Scott stated he believes equity provisions exist in the HRP, including provisions for tracking violations by both owners and lessees. The question of how violations are tracked in the city was also raised and was deemed a conversation that could be had in the future.

Councilors Ewen-Campen and Chair Davis expressed support for moving forward with the HRP at this meeting. They noted that the concerns raised are mainly implementation-related and can be addressed in further discussions as the process progresses.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE:	Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Mbah and City Councilor At Large Strezo
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Referenced Documents:

- Legislative Matters - 2025-04-29 Amending Ch. 12 Art. VI Tree Preservation (with 25-0566)