

Madalyn Letellier

From: Crystal Huff <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, November 6, 2025 4:31 PM
To: All City Council; Public Comments; Mayor
Subject: Somerville Assistance for Food Access

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Dear Mayor Ballantyne, Somerville city councilors, beloved city staff, and any member of the public who reads this,

The City of Cambridge is offering grocery gift cards to Cambridge residents who are SNAP recipients based on some eligibility criteria: older adults (60 years or older), or persons with disabilities, or families who have a child who attends a school/preschool in Cambridge.

www.cambridgema.gov/SNAPFunding

I would urge Somerville to go further than Cambridge. We have seen in the past that means-testing access to a program prevents its use by Somerville residents who needed it. I am still very incensed about the free MBTA passes offered to Somerville residents in 2023.

For those who might not recall it, in June of 2023, Mayor Ballantyne's administration announced that we would purchase 500 T passes (each with 1 year of free T rides) for residents who jumped through the hoops to prove sufficiently small income. <https://www.somervillema.gov/news/somerville-issues-free-transit-passes-low-income-residents>

The 500 T passes were purchased from the MBTA in September of 2023, set to expire in September of 2024. <https://www.caasomerville.org/transit-program>

In MARCH of 2024, there were still 350 of the 500 purchased T passes remaining. They would still expire in September 2024. Our city literally could not give away free T passes before literally half the usefulness had expired. If MAMAS had been allowed to give away those T passes to anyone who requested one, I assure you that we could have distributed them in weeks, not months.

Please, please do something now to help people who are food insecure, and please put less means-testing on top of it. Make it possible for Somerville residents to actually access the assistance easily and without shame.

If you let MAMAS distribute grocery cards, I assure you, we will very promptly get them to people who need food. We are overrun with requests for assistance as it is.

Please help.

Best,

Crystal M. Huff

Ward 5 Resident

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-- I use they/them pronouns. --