



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 13, 2019

REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	Vice Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Brad Rawson - OSPCD, Tom Galligani - OSPCD, Colin Killiyk - Chair of the Disabilities Commission, Annie Connor, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:03 PM by Chairman Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 8:00 PM.

Approval of the March 25, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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GLX Station Accessibility

207714: That the Director of SPCD apprise this Council on the redesign of the various GLX stations with respect to the removal of elevators and the accommodations that had been made to provide reasonable access for all users.

Mr. Rawson reported on the extreme cost cutting measures as it relates to the five (5) new stations in Somerville. He stated that GLX pushed back on the City regarding some improvements. He provided a five (5) page sketch of the stations and walked the committee through the stations from west to east of the city.

Ball Square station will have one elevator and two primary entrances with one entrance at the Winter Hill Bank Corner and from Broadway area. The GLX eliminated the upper entrance. Mr. Killick stated issues with Winchester Street to upper entrance down to Ball Square section, is not slope compliant.

Magoun Square station, previously named Lowell Street station, will have an upper elevated plaza with emergency egress and a waiting area. There will be access from Lowell Street. There

will be two elevators for this location. Mr. Killick expressed concerns for people in the community with mobility disabilities.

Gilman Street station has a series of challenges including a steep slope. There will be two stairs and elevator combinations. Conditions are far below the requirements for ADA standards. There will also be bike storage available. Mr. Killick stated there is no current accessible path from this station to the high school.

East Somerville station is 500 ft from Washington and Joy streets with no elevator, escalator or stairs. The emergency exist is on the west side of the station.

Union Square station will have the community rail on the far side of the platform. The MBTA has been very limited with this station. Again this station will not have stairs, escalator or elevator. There were discussions about the developer possibly providing an entrance. Mr. Rawson will continue to have conversations with GLX about the potential of an elevator. Councilor Hirsch stated that people close to Target will have to walk a distance to get to the entrance.

Mr. Killick stated that people with mobility disabilities will probably not use the Gilman Street Station as currently scheduled to be built since there will be no access for wheelchairs. Mr. Killick stated that this was one of the top priorities, as the station will literally be unusable for anyone in a wheelchair hoping to access the library, City Hall, or the High School. Mr. Killick also emphasized that this is a City-side issue, not one for the state, because the land is city-owned, and is therefore something that should be prioritized.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207735: Calling for improved accessibility at the forthcoming Union Square Green Line Station.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207736: Calling for accessibility and safety improvements at the 7 forthcoming Green Line Stations.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207890: That the Administration work with MassDOT and the GLX team to address the 3 primary safety issues with the Community Path Extension between Washington Street and Lechmere that have been identified by the Friends of the Community Path.

The Chair reported that the Community Path Extension from Washington St to Lechmere is currently proposed to be ~3000 ft long, 10 ft wide with no entrance and no rest areas. The Friends of Community Path have requested 2-3 ft for buffer existing community path, following best practices of Federal guidelines. Mr. Rawson reiterated that, to date, the Somerville GLX Liaison has been pouring over the plans to find any possible improvements required by law - to date, while there have been some minor improvements, in the larger picture, only small improvements have been won. Mr. Rawson and others in the administration have been working constantly with the GLX team, and is working with the MBTA to have another community

meeting in June. It was suggested to have a month to month workflow with the construction stages by October or mid-Fall. Additionally, it was stated that nearly 75% of the design is complete.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207906: Friends of the Community Path submitting comments re: #x, a Resolution to address 3 primary safety issues on the Community Path Extension between Washington St and Lechmere Station.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Gilman Square Planning

207278: That the Director of SPCD meet with the Committee on Housing and Community Development and Gilman Square residents to discuss possible changes to the Neighborhood Plan.

The Ward Councilors and city staff met many times on the community process back in 2014. Recently, there has been an MOU signed with the neighborhood group representing each party, the Gilman Square Neighborhood Association (GSNA). Mr. Galligani stated the Economic Development group has not done much on this matter over past years due to the GLX project. It was stated that the city received a grant of \$200,000 which will be used to work with a consultant. There were discussions about rethinking the infrastructure for pedestrians and bikers in the Marshall Street area. A survey is currently underway to collect data for a potential community meeting in July to help identify priorities. There were discussions about mixed-use of the green space on the corner of Pearl and Medford streets. Residents can call Sue Thomas from economic development with questions about this matter.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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High School Parking

207905: That the Administration work with the High School Building Committee to explore any options to sever construction (or take similar actions) of the playing field as part of the High School project, with the intention to incorporate it into a future capital project to include a parking garage beneath the playing surface.

Ms. Connor stated the administration has been discussing this matter and the parking garage was part of the original plan and then was pulled out. There is a RFP out that closes May 29 for offsite/off-street parking solutions. The Homan's Building location will have 20 parking spots for the high school. Location 90 Washington Street may also have some parking spots but the current cost is \$21M. Given the price, this is not being seriously considered. The Chair asked whether the administration had considered a Public-Private Partnership to build a revenue-

generating parking lot. Ms. Connor will inquire about developers paying towards providing parking. Committee members have heard from the teachers that they are not happy to have to walk from 90 Washington to the high school. It was also stated that school registration is expected to increase in a couple of years and may have more employees for the new school. Ms. Connor will review with Mr. Raiche and executive office to make sure this issue is on the high school building committee's radar.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Municipal Update

206391: That the Administration submit an update to this Board on efforts to create a Municipal ID, including a plan for dealing with the encryption of information that appears to be holding back progress.

Ms. Connor stated the city wants to do this, but there currently is a capacity issue to take it on. Legislation is pending at the state level, which would be more effective for Somerville, as it would deal with issues that could arise from a single City issuing dedicated IDs, such as surrounding communities recognizing such IDs. She suggested the city find ways to get that passed and would need to bring on a consultant to manage this request. The current bill at the state level is S.2061 Work and Family Mobility Act.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

Meeting Notification Radius

204885: That the City Clerk and the Director of SPCD expand abutter notices for Zoning Board of Appeal, Planning Board and Historic Preservation Commission hearings to include tenants of abutting properties in addition to property owners.

The chair stated this had been discussed previously in committee to send notices to current residents. It was suggested this could be accomplished through the construction overhaul. Ms. Connor stated the city's position is this is simple to implement, but complicated to get the information. There were discussions about creative ways to broaden the level of communication by posting notices on boards. A goal would be for anyone to sign up to receive notifications on developments for a particular project. Ms. Connor will send a written response to the committee chair on this matter.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

City Management and Efficiency

207599: That the Administration consider re-establishing a Technology Task Force to make recommendations about municipal and district information technology, including increasing data integration across divisions.

Councilor at Large Hirsch suggested hiring a Chief Information Officer CIO to replace the retired IT director. A CIO would ideally have a vision for centralizing and connecting together all of the various databases that the City collects, and would have basic software programming ability and/or the ability to hire those who do to address these issues.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206201: That the Director of SomerStat share an update on implementing a work order system for asset management, CRM requests, preventive maintenance, and related functions, for departments like Public Works, Engineering, and Urban Forestry.

Ms. Connor stated there is no capacity to handle this request right now. Councilor Hirsch believes this would take our Department of Public Works “to the next level.”

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Housekeeping Items

207771: Affordable Housing Trust submitting quarterly activity reports for the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2018.

RESULT:	PLACED ON FILE
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205412: That the Director of SPCD suggest strategies to mitigate ground floor commercial retail space vacancies.

Councilor at Large Hirsch discussed inclusionary housing for commercial space. Councilor McLaughlin is also working on a similar request.

RESULT:	PLACED ON FILE
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205386: Conveying information about the Tufts Partnership Agreement process.

RESULT:	PLACED ON FILE
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205320: Director of Constituent Services responding to #204377 with the city's policy for following up on Inspectional Services issues when ISD is closed.

RESULT:

PLACED ON FILE

205191: That the Administration inform this Board on the annual number of eviction cases heard in Somerville District Court, the proportion for which the tenant has no legal representation, and the estimated cost of ensuring that all Somerville tenants have such representation.

RESULT:

PLACED ON FILE

207277: That the Commissioner of Public Works remove graffiti from the back of the Argenziano School and consider ways to reduce future graffiti, such as bushes or a mural.

RESULT:

PLACED ON FILE

207864: Harvard University submitting its Spring 2019 University Accountability report.

RESULT:

PLACED ON FILE

Handout:

- GLX Stations (with 207714)