



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

October 5, 2020

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Lance L. Davis	Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Vice Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:06pm and adjourned at 7:40pm.

Councilor Scott left early due to a neighborhood meeting.

Others present: Khushbu Webber - Mayor's Office; Doug Kress - HHS; Brianna Noonan - SomerStat; Omar Boukili - Incident Commander

Chair Davis noted that next week's meeting will be of the Committee rather than the Whole, to focus on other issues before the Committee, but the Whole will reconvene again in two weeks with the COVID topics on the agenda. Chair Davis added that the Honk Festival will be online this year, as Honk United (honkunited.org) and is a great way to gather safely.

Approval of the August 31, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Approval of the September 14, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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209798: That the Director of Health and Human Services appear before this Council with an update on measures to reduce the spread of the coronavirus and to support anyone who may become infected.

Ms. Noonan shared the updated situation summary, including the key dates of October 1, when Somerville extended outdoor restaurant dining accommodations through 2021; September 30, when flu vaccine clinics were announced for October and November; and September 17, when the City announced installation of protective bike lanes on Wellington Bridge as a part of the COVID mobility response.

Global trends show over 35 million cases and 1 million deaths worldwide, with an increase of over 9% in total cases and 5.5% in deaths. In the United States, there are over 7 million cases and 200,000 deaths, and over the last 10 days, cases have increased 6.4% and deaths by 3.7%. Massachusetts is now ranked 17th by total cases and 30th by cases per 100,000 population, but is 5th for total deaths and 2nd for deaths per 100,000. Somerville is rated green according to the MDPH data, with 3.8 new cases by day per 100,000 residents, averaged over a 14 day period.

As of September 30, Somerville conducted a total of 82,540 tests. Between September 16-30, the City conducted 22,532 tests. As of September 30, 0.26% of the COVID tests completed by Somerville residents over the last 2 weeks had positive results, down from 0.35% of all tests on September 23. As of today (October 5) the City has 1,296 positive confirmed cases (PCR test); 102 positive probable cases (antigen or antibody test); 1,220 recovered cases; and 42 fatalities.

The Fire Department last week (9/20-9/26) saw 7 COVID-19 related medical calls, which is two more than the prior week. There have been 402 total COVID-19 related medical calls as of September 28. Last week had an average of 1.15 COVID related calls per day.

The Somerville COVID-19 dashboard is updated on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The dates for the data encompass the week prior to the most recent completed week, in order to account for changes in data as tests and information are reported and updated. The dashboard provides a breakdown of Somerville's data in many ways and is interactive. It can be explored at:

https://public.tableau.com/profile/cityofsomerville#!/vizhome/SomervilleCOVID-19Dashboard_16001759309490/Dashboard3?publish=yes.

Mr. Kress shared the update that the flu clinics this year will be conducted mostly outside, with drive-through and walk-up options. The Health Department will assist with appointments for anyone who is unable to schedule through the website. He also elaborated on the data, noting that the surrounding region is important to understand transmission, which is why the opening phases are delayed compared to the state.

Councilor Strezo clarified that Somerville is currently coded as green, and Mr. Kress confirmed that Somerville's new cases by day per 100,000 is 3.8 and yellow begins at 4.0. Councilor Ewen-Campen expressed concern in the statewide data, noting that it is difficult to understand what the various data actually indicate in terms of what is happening. Mr. Kress noted that there has been a relaxing of practices, and face masks, hand washing, and social distancing remain important. There are additional challenges with ventilation as things begin to move indoors. A green rating does not mean this is over and everyone needs to remain vigilant. He also strongly encouraged flu vaccines to slow the spread of that virus and avoid a burden on the hospitals. Chair Davis shared the reproduction data from <https://rt.live/>. Rt is the average number of people who become infected by an infectious person. If it is above 1.0, COVID-19 will spread quickly. If it is below 1.0, infections will slow. In Massachusetts, it is currently 1.21. Chair Davis added that limiting the size of gatherings is another concern and an important step. Councilor Rossetti expressed confusion about the various dates and

inconsistencies of the data. Ms. Noonan clarified that the link from the Somerville home page will connect to the most recent data, but there will be a delay due to the underestimated count in using the most recent week's data before all cases are added. Councilor Ballantyne asked about the school buildings and requested information on when the School Committee will discuss its re-opening plan. She also inquired about the running clubs and whether there is an opening plan for when those groups will be allowed to gather. Mr. Kress elaborated that many are already happening, with the limitation of 10 per group and following the other guidance such as wearing face coverings when not able to support social distancing.

Councilor Mbah asked how the City is coordinating with neighboring communities and Mr. Kress noted that there are many meetings with surrounding communities, and sharing of information. We need to hold ourselves and other accountable in order to move forward. Councilor Mbah also confirmed that the activity at Trum Field is the flu clinic, not mobile testing. He also asked about Halloween and Mr. Kress shared that there is guidance from the CDC that can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html#halloween>, and creative ideas will be recommended this year as the traditional celebrations do pose risks. Councilor Clingan confirmed that the City has not taken an official position on trick-or-treating yet. He also emphasized a need to continue to share information to update or remind residents of the recommendations, and clarified that masks are still required.

Councilor White asked about contact tracing efforts and whether there are any conclusions drawn from that data about how the virus is spreading. Mr. Kress shared that there are situations where multiple people within a family or address are spreading the virus, and some is also occurring through events, even small ones, where people let their guard down. There is also transmission among co-workers for those who are not able to work from home. The City has worked with different groups on policies and testing for these situations. Councilor White echoed the sentiment that communication to reinforce safe behaviors would be helpful, particularly in light of holiday gatherings. Councilor Strezo added that she has submitted several orders requesting public awareness campaigns and communication. Mr. Kress confirmed that this work is moving forward.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210428: That the Administration advise this Council as soon as possible, what oversight it will implement with Tufts University, following Tufts' decision to invite all undergraduate students back to campus for the fall 2020 semester.

See 209798.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210460: That the Administration and the Traffic Commission cease all dedicated Tufts shuttle stops and remove all associated signage in Ward 6, particularly in Davis Square, without delay.

Chair Davis noted that concern began during the return to campus for Tufts students, and the primary consideration now is that there are large queues for the shuttle that block the sidewalk and create a public health hazard due to limited distancing. Mr. Rawson is working on this issue for the City, and the Chair expressed an interest in Tufts taking more responsibility. Chair Davis elaborated that members of the community use the shuttle, not just Tufts students, and providing the access is important, but it must be done safely. Mr. Rawson and his team sought alternative locations where distancing could be safely

achieved. Some of these options may be on private property. There has also been a change to where the shuttles are cleaned between routes, which should eliminate some of the concerns about shuttles using smaller neighborhood streets. Mr. Dirico of Tufts shared that the University is in discussions with the owner of the 7-11 about shifting the location to that property, and alternative locations will continue to be explored. Chair Davis expressed that there is a sense of urgency and he will advocate that the Traffic Commission remove this stop.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

210606: That the Director of Health and Human Services and Tufts University provide this Council with weekly updates on the number of unique COVID-19 tests administered to Tufts undergraduate and graduate students until all students have been tested.

See 209798.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handouts:

- 201005 Situation Summary for City Council (with 209798)