



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

October 22, 2014

REPORT OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Katjana Ballantyne	Chair	Present	
Rebekah L. Gewirtz	Vice Chair	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five Alderman	Present	

Alderman Mary Jo Rossetti, Alderman Tony Lafuente, Alderman John Connolly, Omar Boukili, Oliver Sellers-Garcia (OSE), Matt Buckley (Law), Andrea Ranger (Energy Commission), Michael Ripple, David Turin, Melissa Lowitz, Maureen Barillaro (Somerville Climate Action)

**Approval of the Minutes of May 27, 2014**

**RESULT:**

**APPROVED**

**195591 - That the Director of Transportation and Infrastructure conduct a tree survey of Powderhouse Boulevard and produce a tree planting schedule that will maintain the current tree canopy.:**

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**196628 - That the City Solicitor provide this Board with information regarding plastic bag reduction techniques utilized in other MA municipalities, as well as whether the city can place a deposit fee on such bags or regulate their use to contain free advertisers.:**

Mr. Buckley reported that 5 other MA towns are taking similar actions. All were reviewed by the Attorney General's Office and approved as being within the authority of selectmen, etc. and being a proper use of its policing powers. Mr. Buckley reviewed a draft ordinance that mirrored Brookline's and pointed out that Somerville already has 3 ordinances dealing with plastic bags. Alderman Gewirtz suggested that the fines be changed to increase the 2nd offense to \$100 and the 3rd to \$300, without limiting the city's ability to impose fines within a certain time period.

Alderman Niedergang discussed how manufacturers might avoid being affected by this ordinance by changing the thickness of their plastic bags. The detrimental effects of some compostable and/or biodegradable bags were also discussed. Mr. Sellers-Garcia spoke with Brookline's Public Health Director and was told that compostable/biodegradable bags not readily available. Brookline observed that, after enacting its ordinance, it appeared that plastic bag use

was entirely replace by paper bags, (although there is no factual data on this). Ms. Lowitz spoke about the litter caused by plastic bags and suggested that compostable/biodegrade bags would probably still end up as litter.

Currently, there are 200 cities/towns in 17 states banning plastic bags. Chairman Ballantyne will schedule a public hearing on the matter.

**RESULT:****KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**197029 - That the Director of Sustainability and Environment update this Board on steps being taken to educate businesses and enforcement regarding the city's polystyrene ban.:**

**RESULT:****WORK COMPLETED**

**197490 - That the Director of Sustainability and Environment appear before this Board's Committee on Environment and Energy on his plans for the coming year.:**

Mr. Sellers-Garcia told members that the city is working on establishing a baseline and understanding risks of sustainability and environmental issues. A broader presentation will be forthcoming at this committee's November 17th meeting.

**RESULT:****KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**197491 - That the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change appear before this Board's Committee on Environment and Energy about their activities over the past year and their plans for the coming year.:**

Ms. Ranger spoke briefly about the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change. The 7 member commission is charged with advising the mayor on ethical and policy issues dealing with energy and climate change. The city's goal is to be carbon neutral by 2050. Ms. Ranger stated that the city would be wise to commission a resiliency plan study to ensure that energy would be provided to critical departments in the event of a power grid failure.

**RESULT:****WORK COMPLETED**