



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Charter Review Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 7, 2022

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Scott at 6:02 pm and adjourned at 6:49 pm. Chair Scott moved to adjourn, and the motion was passed by roll call vote.

Councilor Davis was present but experienced technical difficulties at first that prevented him from taking a roll call vote.

Others present:

Aneesh Sahni - Mayor's Office, Bernabe Rodriguez - Clerk's Office, Stephanie Widzowski - Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Vice Chair Kristen Strezo, Willie Burnley Jr., Jesse Clingan, Lance L. Davis, Ben Ewen-Campen, Beatriz Gomez Mouakad, Charlotte Kelly, Matthew McLaughlin, Judy Pineda Neufeld and Jake Wilson

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [22-2053](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 21, 2022.

RESULT: APPROVED
AYE: Chairperson Scott, Vice Chair Strezo, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Clingan, Ewen-Campen, Gomez Mouakad, Kelly, McLaughlin, Pineda Neufeld and Wilson
ABSENT: Davis

Public Hearing regarding Item# 22-1520, Charter Review

Chair Scott announced her intention to hold an in-person public hearing on January 11, up until which written public comment can be submitted to CityClerk@SomervilleMA.gov <<mailto:CityClerk@SomervilleMA.gov>>. After that, there will be in-person meetings scheduled for January 25 and February 8 to address the topics of power balance and finance, respectively. Chair Scott shared a link to a public Google Drive folder containing past presentations and reports on charter reform:
www.tinyurl.com/HashtagCharterReform
<<http://www.tinyurl.com/HashtagCharterReform>>

Chair Scott opened the public hearing and gave each attendee two minutes to speak.

- Jess Smith spoke in favor of the changes and of increasing the check

- on the Mayor's budgeting power.
- Derrick Rice spoke in favor of the changes and said that transparency would improve with an increased role for the City Council.
 - Corey Donohue spoke to ways that the reforms would distribute power more evenly. Corey Donohue also endorsed ranked choice voting and giving the City Council the power to reallocate funds.
 - Jaime Perconti expressed support for periodic review of the charter and suggested a standing committee that reviews a limited number of ordinances each year to prevent undue burden. They also expressed concern about procedures over the Administrative Code.
 - Crystal H. supported increased budget power for the City Council, expanding voting rights for non-citizens and residents age 16-17. They urged keeping the Mayor's term at two years.
 - Sam Alterman advocated for the City Council to be able to reallocate funds and urged against a four-year mayoral term.
 - Ryan Black spoke in favor of expanding voting rights for non-citizens and residents age 16-17, but suggested reversing the changes to the Mayor's term and removing the Chief Administrative Officer position.
 - Rebecca Miller supported increased financial power for the Council and voting rights, and praised Councilor Wilson's FY22 budget review process, but urged to keep mayoral and city councilor terms the same length.
 - Zachary Yaro voiced support for ranked-choice voting.
 - Catherine Leech spoke in favor of the City Council reallocating funds, but suggested keeping the mayoral term to two years and removing or limiting the ability of the Mayor to make temporary appointments without City Council approval.
 - Bonnie Denis expressed concern that commissions such as the Commission for Persons with Disabilities have been understaffed because the Mayor has not been appointing members. She also drew attention to the fact that closed captioning was requested at this meeting and was not available.
 - Andrew Sebald spoke against the four-year mayoral term and in favor of expanding the age limit for elections. He also said that the City Council should be able to reallocate funds.
 - Patrick Cain suggested removing the expansion on voting rights from the Home Rule Petition to speed up the process. He listed multiple suggested revisions to the reform.

Councilor McLaughlin commented that the Clerk's office is working on an accessibility platform for virtual meetings.

2. Officer's Communication (ID # [22-1520](#)) Charter Review Committee conveying its recommendations and proposed Charter text.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**