



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Legislative Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 31, 2023

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:04 pm and adjourned at 8:31 pm with a roll call vote of all in favor (Councilor Scott, Councilor Burnley, Councilor Kelly, and Chair Davis), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor McLaughlin).

Others present: Aneesh Sahni – Mayor’s Office, Neha Singh – Mayor’s Office, Brendan Salisbury – City Clerk, Christopher Major – Fire, Sean Sheehan – SPD, Victor Nascimento – OSPCD, Brad Rawson – OSPCD, Catherine Lester Salchert – Law Office, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis, City Councilor At Large Charlotte Kelly, Willie Burnley Jr. and Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott
Absent: Matthew McLaughlin

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-0158](#)) Approval of the Legislative Matters Committee Minutes of January 17, 2023.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**
AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Kelly, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Two City Councilor Scott
ABSENT: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin

Surveillance Technology Annual Reports

2. Mayor's Communication (ID # [23-0107](#)) Conveying the 2022 Surveillance Technology Annual Report as it relates to Somerville Public Schools.

Dir. Sahni said that school staff are unable to attend the meeting and passed along a request from the Superintendent that questions be conveyed to the School Department in writing. Councilor Kelly referred to the notification system mentioned in the first section of the report and requested an update when that system goes into effect.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

3. Mayor's Communication (ID # [23-0086](#)) Conveying the 2022 Surveillance Technology Annual Report.

Chair Davis asked for any changes in the report in the past year. Lt. Sheehan said that numbers change yearly depending on crime patterns, but no new technology has been acquired since last year. Assistant Chief Major, Mr. Nascimento and Dir. Rawson said there were also no changes to report in their departments.

Councilor Scott asked about the requisition process for Grey Key technology, Councilor Kelly asked when GPS monitors that were unused in 2021 and 2022 will be disposed of, and Chair Davis asked if the intent is to leave the GLX cameras in place now that the GLX is operational. Lt. Sheehan talked about the warrant process for obtaining Grey Key technology from the Attorney General's office and said he would get clarification on the other two questions.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Surveillance Technology Ordinance

4. Order (ID # [23-0172](#)) By Councilor Davis That the Council amend the Surveillance Technology Ordinance to clarify that it covers cameras used for automated traffic or parking enforcement.

This item came out of discussion of item 22-1453 at the January 17, 2023 Legislative Matters meeting. Chair Davis shared language for a proposed revision to the Surveillance Technology Ordinance drafted with Legislative Policy Analyst Salisbury. He said that he would take feedback on the draft and bring a new item before the Council with the final amendment text.

Councilor Kelly commented in favor of the proposed changes. However, she added that while there are items in the Surveillance Technology Annual Report that collect data such as license plate numbers, the committee is still discussing whether to include those technologies in the Surveillance Technology Ordinance. Councilor Burnley also commented in favor, but voiced concerns received from constituents about the third-party company that would use license plate information to draft tickets. He also advocated for a more community-based approach to enforcement. Dir. Sahni requested that any language up for consideration be sent to the Law Office for review first.

Chair Davis moved to recommend that the City Council adopt a change to the Surveillance Technology Ordinance consistent with the discussions in this committee meeting. The motion was approved by a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilor Scott, Councilor Burnley, Councilor Kelly, Chair Davis), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor McLaughlin).

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Extending Acting Police Chief

- 5. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0074](#))

Requesting approval of a Home Rule Petition to authorize the continued employment of Acting Somerville Police Chief Charles J. Femino.

Chair Davis said that there was a communication from Dir. Capers of RSJ last week summarizing the police chief search process. The Administration is currently collecting feedback from key constituents and stakeholders and will seek the Council’s input as well. Dir. Sahni added that there will also be a community outreach phase that includes listening sessions open to the public. Chair Davis asked why this Home Rule Petition was being submitted for a second year in a row, and Dir. Sahni explained that finding a consultant took longer than expected because the Administration needed to resubmit their RFP.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Kelly and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

NAY: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin

Neighborhood Council Ordinance Update

- 6. Ordinance (ID # [22-1293](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Kelly

Proposing Amendments to the Neighborhood Council Designation Ordinance (Chapter 7, Article IX) to encourage the formation of such neighborhood councils.

Councilor Scott explained that he met in early November with Legislative Policy Analyst Salisbury and Acting Special Counsel Salchert. One of the topics they discussed was how prescriptive the ordinance should be. The redline changes in the attached documents came from that meeting.

The committee discussed paragraph 4 of Sec. 7-221 and deliberated over which version of the amendment document is the most recent. Atty Salchert reviewed areas in the proposed language where she felt the intent could be made clearer. Topics discussed include overlapping councils, affiliations of board members, age of members, how much control the City Council should have over the recognition process, and responsibilities of recognized councils. A highlight of the discussion was over the last paragraph of Sec. 7-222 that calls for the City Council to approve a neighborhood council’s request for recognition by a 2/3 vote. Atty Salchert raised the question of whether, given a City Council meeting where there is a quorum but the full body is not present, a simple majority could create an unwanted situation.

Chair Davis said he would need to determine whether a 2/3 vote implies two-thirds of the whole or of members present.

Dir. Sahni asked if the language in Sec. 7-224 sufficiently prevents creating a new government entity, which was a previous concern. Atty Salchert said that she would make that section less about the city and more about the process of a neighborhood council developing positions.

Chair Davis said that he will give Atty Salchert time to revise the proposed language, and then he will attach the new draft to a future agenda.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

To be considered for closing/placing on file

7. Order
(ID # [22-0180](#))
- By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Scott, Councilor Kelly and Councilor Clingan
That the Director of Housing provide a written update on the current status of compliance with the Short-Term Rental Ordinance.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
8. Order
(ID # [22-0451](#))
- By Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Kelly, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Scott, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Strezo, Councilor Davis and Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the City Solicitor prepare a revision to the appropriate ordinance so vehicles that are parked in a crosswalk, or blocking a bicycle lane, ADA ramp, bus stop, or sidewalk may be towed as well as ticketed.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
9. Order
(ID # [22-0037](#))
- By Councilor Davis
That the administration advise the City Council, and provide the language to allow cannabis delivery in the most streamlined way possible.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
10. Order
(ID # [22-0047](#))
- By Councilor Davis
That the Administration re-submit the Report of the Clean and Open Elections Task Force.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

- 11. Mayor's Communication (ID # [23-0106](#)) Conveying information regarding item 23-0084, a Mayor's Request requesting the adoption of the Specialized Energy Code.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**