



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 1, 2022

REPORT OF THE CONFIRMATION OF APPOINTMENTS AND PERSONNEL MATTERS COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Judy PinedaNeufeld	Chair	Present	
Kristen Strezo	Vice Chair	Present	
Charlotte Kelly	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
Jake Wilson	City Councilor At Large	Present	

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Pineda Neufeld at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 9:07 pm. Councilor Clingan arrived late due to another meeting. Councilor Clingan moved to adjourn, and the motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

The committee voted to go into executive session at 8:30 by roll call vote to discuss item 213858. Open session reconvened at 9:02 pm and a quorum was established with all members present. No votes were taken in executive session.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo - Mayor's Office, Anne Gill - Personnel, Kevin Shackelford - SPD, James Stanford - SPD, Christine Blais - OSE, Edna Murray, Janine Lotti, Stayce Pelton, Ashley Speliotis, Giusippina Mingace, Ronit Prawer, Daisy Monsalve, Eri Furusawa, Stephanie Widzowski - Assistant Clerk of Committees.

Approval of the May 4, 2022 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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213865: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Giusippina Mingace to the Council on Aging.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked how many open positions are on the Council of Aging, and for a description of the role of the council. Dir. Speliotis explained that the Council of Aging is an advisory council to help with transparency and equity. They have seven open positions being discussed at this meeting.

Dir. Speliotis continued by introducing the candidate, Giusippina Mingace. Ms. Mingace is a long-time volunteer at the Senior Center and helps with the Memory Café. She made calls to

seniors unable to leave their homes even before the pandemic. Dir. Speliotis and Ms. Mingace both described Ms. Mingace's accomplishments and experiences as a volunteer.

Councilor Wilson asked Ms. Mingace what she thought Somerville could do better for its seniors. She answered that she finds the Senior Center to be the best solution with its open-door policy, kind staff, and the resources they provide seniors.

Councilor Kelly asked Ms. Mingace what are some needs going unmet that she has identified in her work. Ms. Mingace replied that seniors sometimes have family situations or concerns whether they will belong at the center. She says the center hosts many activities to support seniors' needs.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	PinedaNeufeld, Strezo, Kelly, Clingan, Wilson

213866: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Edna Murray to the Council on Aging.

Dir. Speliotis said that Ms. Murray is a long-time employee and resident of Somerville currently living in a multi-generational household. She has a lot of customer service knowledge and is an advocate for seniors. Ms. Murray added that she would like to see the return of the level of pre-pandemic activities for seniors. She said many people cannot get places they want to go, and trips to local stores or into the city for lunch always sell out.

Councilor Wilson asked what work Ms. Murray did at City Hall. She responded that she was the Assistant Election Commissioner for more than 20 years. Councilor Wilson noted that Ms. Murray wanted to see trips come back, and asked what else the city could do better for seniors. Ms. Murray said she would like to see more access for people with wheelchairs, as cabs do not always take people with wheelchairs. Councilor Wilson commented that a close family friend of his growing up relied on a wheelchair and that he knew how isolating that can be without the proper support.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	PinedaNeufeld, Strezo, Kelly, Clingan, Wilson

213860: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Ronit Prawer to the Council on Aging.

Dir. Speliotis explained that Ms. Prawer is a new resident of Somerville and new to the Council on Aging, but has a wealth of experience in finance and fundraising from other boards. She is currently working with the British Embassy developing science programs, and Dir. Speliotis said she would be a great addition to the Council on Aging.

Councilor Wilson praised Ms. Prawer for getting involved in the city so soon after moving and asked what she believed Somerville could do better for seniors. Ms. Prawer answered that she was not suited to answer this question yet, but she would take on a support role for others who have been in Somerville longer. She spoke to her experience collaborating with a Ukraine-based charity, and said that often people live and interact with others their own age, but supported moving toward a more multi-generational model.

Chair Pineda Neufeld said that she would sometimes hear during her campaign that there is an “us vs. them” feeling between groups in the city, that Somerville is prioritizing others’ needs over those of seniors. She asked how one might bridge that divide. Ms. Prawer replied that she does not envy the Council for needing to manage limited resources for everyone, but spoke to the idea of Somerville being “more than the sum of its parts”. She said that in youth communities she has worked with, there is a need to practice public speaking or resume building. Seniors have experience and wisdom in many of those areas. She said that the solution could involve connecting those groups together to trade services and meet everyone’s needs where possible.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	PinedaNeufeld, Strezo, Kelly, Clingan, Wilson

213861: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Maclise Jean to the Council on Aging.

Dir. Speliotis said that Ms. Jean is a long-time Somerville resident with family in the area that uses the Council on Aging’s services. She works as an advocate for seniors and people with disabilities, and the council is excited to see new program ideas that Ms. Jean develops.

Ms. Jean said that she has been a social worker for the last 11 years, working as a residential mental health counselor, a housing specialist, resident service coordinator, and finally as a housing case manager. She explained that she assesses elders for services and provides programming, and that she is interested in this position because her goal is to support elders aging in place.

Councilor Wilson asked what the city can do better for seniors and those with disabilities. Ms. Jean called for more programming and better, more involved outreach. She said that in the Haitian Creole population, not everyone is aware of what services are provided. She also suggested that the old high school could be transformed into senior housing, which would facilitate multi-generational socializing.

Chair Pineda Neufeld commented that her abuela faced barriers getting involved in activities and asked what ways are there to make spaces more inclusive for all immigrant populations. Ms. Jean spoke to her own grandmother passing away last year and facing a language barrier for programming. She suggested having outdoors activities where everyone can socialize, or having music and music-based activities that cross barriers.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	PinedaNeufeld, Strezo, Kelly, Clingan, Wilson

213862: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Marian Bremer to the Council on Aging.

Dir. Speliotis spoke to the candidate’s career as a librarian. Ms. Bremer has a focus in teaching about technology and internet, and left her position at MIT to focus on her volunteer roles with the Somerville Historical Museum and the Somerville Archives department. Dir. Speliotis said that the Senior Center has a way to go on incorporating technology and can use Ms. Bremer’s expertise.

Ms. Bremer said that her whole career has been involved with knowledge and helping people who need the resources of general and research libraries. She became interested in this position because she is becoming disabled, but needs a car to get places where she can then walk or bike. She said that the city is doing things that make drivers feel evil, forgetting that some people need to drive. She spoke to the barriers to accessibility in Somerville, including a lack of usable, accessible parking spaces, the layout of offstreet parking, steep slopes, and a lack of benches. She suggested a program to both create benches and involve Somerville artists. Ms. Bremer said her main interest now is aging in place, but isolation is a challenge. There is a program to give certificates to contractors for aging in place, but they cost \$700 and need to be picked up in New Jersey. She suggested the Council could fund contractors to get these certificates. Transparency is another issue. She spoke to the importance of staff knowing what is happening and how to explain it to citizens. Finally, she called for engaging seniors not just at centers, but in community-wide events.

Councilor Strezo echoed Ms. Bremer's comments about inaccessible parking, citing the parking in front of the library on Highland Ave, as well as construction vehicles parking in accessible spaces. She also referred to a project between Mudflat and Teen Empowerment last year that resulted in a bench on Cross St. She said she hopes to work together to see more efforts like that. Ms. Bremer added that some traffic calming measures do not seem to be helping pedestrians. She said she believed speed bumps are the least effective way to get cars to slow down, and the speed bumps on Morrison have pedestrian crossings that need to be repainted.

Councilor Wilson asked what else could be done for seniors. Ms. Bremer spoke more about aging in place. Many seniors have outdated appliances, and the city could address multiple problems at once by subsidizing the installation of newer, more energy-efficient appliances. Subsidizing other structural changes that people may need is a larger issue than just appliances, though. Ms. Bremer said that she had seen hilly cities in Europe with outdoor escalators as one solution. She also said that she attended a Bicycle Committee meeting, and they were welcoming, but most members were much younger than her and did not seem elder-focused. She suggested bringing that focus to them.

Councilor Clingan commented that it became clear through his conversations with residents at the Pearl St apartments that more needs to be done with the nearby park.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	PinedaNeufeld, Strezo, Kelly, Clingan, Wilson

213863: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Neeraj Wadhera to the Council on Aging.

Chair Pineda Neufeld said that the candidate was unable to be here tonight, and will join the committee for a meeting later this month.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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213864: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Daisy Monsalve to the Council on Aging.

Dir. Speliotis said that Ms. Monsalve is another long-term member of the Senior Center - over twenty years - and has spent her life in advocacy work since emigrating from Cuba in the 1970s. Not only did she serve as a paraprofessional in paid positions, she has also been on the Women's Council, and has spent much time volunteering and encouraging people to visit the Arts Center.

Ms. Monsalve talked about her experience since moving to the United States, including working at an engineering company and being part of the effort to clean Boston Harbor. She said that she misses music and dancing the most, particularly the picnic event in the park.

Councilor Wilson asked what else can be done better for seniors in Somerville. Ms. Monsalve said that bicycle traffic needs to be regulated. She also said that the streetlights need attention, particularly around Powder House Boulevard. It is hard to see when walking there and is dangerous for seniors.

RESULT:

APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]

AYES:

PinedaNeufeld, Strezo, Kelly, Clingan, Wilson

213859: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Eri Furusawa to the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked for a description of the role of the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change and for the number of open positions. Dir. Blais responded that this commission is responsible for advising the Mayor's Office and OSE on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in buildings and transportation - the city's two largest sources - and doing engagement in the community. The commission also advises on energy matters. Of the eight seats on the commission, there has been one open seat since last summer. Ms. Furusawa would be filling the remainder of that term, which goes through 2024. The commission is looking to improve equity, climate resiliency and adaptation in the city, and for someone to join the team with experience working with marginalized communities. Dir. Blais said that she thinks Ms. Furusawa would be a fantastic addition to the commission.

Ms. Furusawa said that her background is in architecture in urban planning, and her passion is finding ways to adapt to climate change and leave a more sustainable world for the next generation. She focuses on centering city planning processes around equity and inclusivity. Through her role at an urban policy consultant firm, she worked alongside cities, and sometimes community organizations, to include those traditionally left out of decision-making. She said that not everyone follows the city's social media or knows what climate change is, and it is important not only to achieve the right outcomes, but the right process as well.

Chair Pineda Neufeld praised Ms. Furusawa's application for highlighting the importance of language in equity, and asked how the candidate would evaluate the Somerville Climate Forward program through the lens of equity and inclusivity. Ms. Furusawa replied that it is difficult to evaluate, but that one challenge is to be transparent about whose voices shaped the plan. In her experience, some cities have done focus groups or surveys for community engagement, but there are obstacles to identifying which groups participated. She said she would like to build on that process in Somerville, thinking not just about how to engage people with inclusive language, but with cultural competencies as well. She said that the city is already thinking about how to create more inviting spaces, but she would like to help.

Councilor Kelly referenced Boston Mayor Michelle Wu’s announcement of a multi-million dollar Green New Deal for schools, and that at last week’s City Council meeting, educators at Winter Hill spoke about the desperate need for a new building. She asked how Ms. Furusawa saw the commission playing a role in shaping the future of public school buildings as well as municipal buildings more generally. Ms. Furusawa answered that she wants to think through how to change engagement with schools and how to identify needs - beyond the physical needs for the buildings, but also about how students and parents feel. She said it was also a resource allocation issue.

Councilor Kelly asked in reference to the climate crisis, how to balance the need for an inclusive process, recognizing decades of marginalization, with the urgency to face the crisis. Ms. Furusawa said that she feels there is a false dichotomy between the time it takes to engage inclusively and the time needed to act. She said there are ways to conduct inclusive engagement without losing urgency: for example, many cities “pretend to start from scratch” with engagement, neglecting what communities have already shared up to that point through meetings and comments. It is important to listen and acknowledge what has already been shared. Another piece is to avoid creating additional harm in the engagement process. She said she has seen cities conduct engagement with false promises of getting things done, and that damages trust between the city and those who it seeks to engage.

Councilor Wilson commented that many solutions to greenhouse gases can come with a large price tag - for example, electric vehicles - and that excludes people. He asked what decarbonization solutions would be possible that could serve all community members. Ms. Furusawa said that affordability is often not considered in decarbonization, and solutions could focus on how much carbon is being removed from the atmosphere, but that this seems like a larger question of what defines success. She said that the city not only needs to look at total greenhouse gases, but who has access to support systems and who is benefiting from decarbonization.

Councilor Wilson asked if the candidate was familiar with BUDO building regulations, and explained that they are a way to force reduced emissions. He asked Ms. Furusawa to speak to the challenges of regulating building emissions through an equity lens. Ms. Furusawa replied that NYC passed a law 2-3 years ago regulating building emissions, recognizing that buildings make up the largest portion of greenhouse gas emissions in the city. She said that this is an important, but complex, issue because it intersects with land use. She said their team noted that throughout the city, building incentives would work better for commercial tenants or larger buildings than for outer boroughs or residential areas. She said that Somerville should think about who is more likely to be impacted or incentivized by policy, and that often the term “unintended consequences” is used, but it is more accurate to say there is a lack of analysis.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	PinedaNeufeld, Strezo, Kelly, Clingan, Wilson

213817: Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Janine Lotti to the Fair Housing Commission, as the Somerville Housing Authority representative.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked for an introduction to the candidate and the role and number of open positions for the Fair Housing Commission. Mx. Pelton said that the FHC investigates reports of fair housing and does advocacy and education outreach for landlords and the general community.

As part of their ordinance, one of the FHC's commissioners is to be a representative from the Somerville Housing Authority. That position is the only vacant one, and Mx. Pelton said that they believe Ms. Lotti will do well in that role. They said that they will have at least three members who live or work in the city, one will be a Somerville tenant receiving public assistance, and one is experienced in housing social services and civil rights. Ms. Lotti has experience in affordable housing and does a lot of case management and promoting self-sufficiency.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked why the candidate is interested in this position. Ms. Lotti said that the FHC's work aligns with her current work, and she shares a philosophy with the FHC as well. She said that she spent much of her career working in affordability, working with the Somerville Community Corporation for five years and serving as a board member for 8-10 years prior to that.

Councilor Kelly commented that the primary focus of the FHC is enforcement and asked what ideas the candidate has for better enforcing housing laws and protecting marginalized residents. Ms. Lotti said she felt the commission does a good job. She spoke of her visit to classes for new homebuyers, many of whom are still renting, and how the classes focus on making sure homebuyers understand that fair housing issues extend beyond renting. She said that the FHC can connect people to different programs and services according to their needs, and that in her experience the FHC works hard to educate people and make information available.

Councilor Kelly noted that with the eviction moratorium expiring soon, there has been much talk about protections for residents. She asked how as the Somerville Housing Authority representative, Ms. Lotti sees her role to keep marginalized residents in their homes. Ms. Lotti replied that she felt the SHA is in the business of finding homes for people, not evicting them, and that informs her thinking. She commented that waitlists for programs are long, sometimes still holding applications from over a decade back, but making sure residents know about the programs will make a dent in the housing problem.

Councilor Strezo asked what immediate needs SHA residents are facing. Ms. Lotti noted that there has been violence in the city recently. She said that she is part of the resident services team, but it is more her supervisor who spearheads the program to inform tenants. She said that the SHA does everything it can to foster community, and a lot of their programs are to give families space to voice their opinions and turn those concerns into programming.

Councilor Clingan asked if this vacant position is replacing another housing worker. Mx. Pelton replied that there had been a vacancy since that worker left and they are excited for Ms. Lotti to join the FHC.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	PinedaNeufeld, Strezo, Kelly, Clingan, Wilson

213858: Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Kevin Shackelford to the position of Police Lieutenant.

Deputy Chief Stanford explained that Acting Lieutenant Shackelford is a 22-year veteran of the SPD. Promoted to Sergeant in 2015, he has been serving as a temporary lieutenant since Mar

2021. The position became open through retirement of the previous lieutenant. Deputy Chief Stanford said that Lt. Shackelford has been an exemplary employee.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked Lt. Shackelford to talk about himself and say what he loves most about the city. He responded that his favorite part of Somerville is the diversity. He grew up on the crest of Hutton St in a diverse neighborhood, and everyone got along. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked what concerns he has about this role. Lt. Shackelford said he did not have many concerns as he has been working this role for about a year due to a staffing shortage. He said that he feels comfortable with the work and knows who to consult if he does have concerns.

Councilor Kelly asked the candidate what he would do if he saw a non-SPD officer using excessive force on people demonstrating their First Amendment rights. Lt. Shackelford responded that he would intervene in the moment to resolve the situation as quickly as possible, and ensure that proper documentation is sent up the chain of command afterward. Councilor Kelly asked what he felt the role of trauma-informed care is in Somerville - explaining that means recognizing that people may have a range of trauma that informs their reactions, and using compassion and approach in interacting with them. Lt. Shackelford said that they have gone through crisis intervention training, and a large part of that is communication and not being overbearing. He stressed the need to talk to people, not order them, to do things, and bringing resources on scene if necessary. De-escalation is a key aspect of crisis intervention.

Councilor Kelly mentioned the city's efforts in the past few years to reimagine public safety, and how that reflects programs across the country: for example, CAHOOTS in Washington. She asked the candidate what value these programs have. Lt. Shackelford said that SPD collaborates with mental health and sometimes medical services to assist with calls, and that he wants to respond to help people, not always as law enforcement. Councilor Kelly said that if promoted, the candidate will be seen as a leader in the department. She asked if the city were to create an unarmed emergency response unit, how Lt. Shackelford would work as a leader to build the respect and authority necessary for that unit to provide unarmed emergency services. Lt. Shackelford said that it is important to be an advocate and follow community input on how to provide the best policing. He said SPD needs to adjust to the shifting views of the role of policing.

There was discussion about when it would be appropriate to move to executive session to answer other councilors' questions. A short recess was taken to prepare the executive session meeting, and then a unanimous roll call vote was taken to move to executive session.

After reconvening in open session, councilors Clingan and Wilson expressed support for the candidate.

RESULT:	APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	PinedaNeufeld, Strezo, Kelly, Clingan, Wilson