



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 6, 2017

REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Mark Niedergang	Chair	Present	
Tony Lafuente	Vice Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven Alderman	Present	

Others present: Brad Rawson - OSPCD, Michael Glavin - OSPCD, Mr. Lister - Insulators Union, Stan Koty - DPW, Tim Snyder - Mayor's Office, Charles Sillari - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 4:33 PM by Alderman Niedergang and adjourned at 6:11 PM.

Approval of the December 5, 2016 Minutes

RESULT: ACCEPTED

202764: That the Director of SPCD meet with the Administration, Cambridge transportation planners, and the MBTA business group to discuss Inman Square's intersection redesign, and further, that the Director assign planning staff to attend and address Somerville's concerns at Cambridge planning meetings, and further, that said staff brief this Board and organize with the Ward 2 Alderman a neighborhood meeting to share findings and feedback.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

200517: That the Mayor or his designee report at this Board's January 14, 2016 meeting on the status of the Green Line Extension into Union Square and beyond.

Mr. Rawson said people are concerned about commitments being kept, but he feels Massachusetts is in good shape. There is serious bidder interest and proposal documents will be due in September or October. Mr. Rawson also said that trained and reputable construction managers were brought in.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

202620: That the Director of SPCD, Director of Engineering, Commissioner of Public Works, ADA Coordinator, and Mayor’s Office work with the Ward 5 Alderman to convene a community meeting in February to discuss improvements in the streetscape on Murdock Street.

Chairman Niedergang explained the projects on Murdock Street and said that residents in the area have expressed concerns about the need for development, narrow streets, the lack of sidewalks and parking issues. A twenty unit project will bring with it more vehicle and pedestrian traffic, and residents would like to evaluate the options. There was a discussion about sidewalks and who should be responsible for their placement. Residents don’t believe that the developer should be responsible for the sidewalks and would prefer to have the city decide where they want sidewalks. Other topics discussed included the effects of sidewalks on the width of the street and how they would impact parking, the possibility of making it a one way street, children’s safety, sidewalk curbing to prevent water from getting into people’s property and a storm drain. Mr. Rawson will follow up with answers and Chairman Niedergang will schedule a community meeting.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202516: That the Chief Assessor report to this Board about past and planned outreach to make seniors, veterans and other qualified homeowners aware of exemptions and deferrals that could ease their property tax burden, along with numerical goals, for FY17 to FY20.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202497: That the Superintendent of Schools share plans with the Ward 7 Alderman to mitigate the negative student enrollment at the West Somerville Neighborhood School caused by the proposed Clarendon/North Street Public Housing project.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202308: That the Director SPCD request a redesign and upgrade to the asphalt playground, tot lot and “cave” courtyard at the West Somerville Neighborhood School.

Alderman Ballantyne said she wants a clear explanation of who has responsibility for this so that parents know who they should be talking to. Parents are concerned about the design of the cave and Mr. Koty asked what the parents want done with the cave. He was told that parents want the playground upgraded so the older kids won’t want to go near the cave and they want nice turf put down. Another request would be to possibly put up a wall to eliminate trouble with the neighbors. The PTA wants the bushes trimmed back and think the cave could be used as an outdoor classroom. Mr. Koty will clean the area and address the concerns, especially if safety is involved, and would like to meet at the site next Monday morning with parents and the principal. The committee discussed a way for parents to communicate their concerns and get things completed. Mr. Snyder said this is a priority in the city and that replacing black top is important. The process will be communicated with parents. The dumpster gate, dumpster location and gates to stop balls were discussed. Alderman Ballantyne said the #1 priority should be the children, not the dumpster location.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

202181: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board on the development of a strategic plan for the city's role in workforce development and job training, and the city's intention on implementing the recommendations in the 2013 Somerville Jobs Advisory Committee Report.

Mr. Galligani said workforce development is an important part of the economic development strategy. A staff person, Ben Summers, has been assigned and spends 60% of his time in this area, taking the lead on many opportunities. He is connecting Somerville residents with jobs in Somerville. Some are temporary construction jobs and some are permanent jobs. A \$15,000 grant was received to develop a workforce development plan. An RFP will be issued to identify a consultant.

Chairman Niedergang is glad to see a little money available to develop a plan and would like to see the administration spend more money if needed. He pointed out that affordability is gone and said that something should have been done 10 years ago. Alderman Lafuente said it is not about money. He said talk is cheap and people live better in NYC.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

196437: That the Director of SPCD (Economic Development) report on the development of and funding for the local hiring and workforce development First Source program, and report on the outcome of FRIT's recent job fairs for Assembly Square, including Somervillians getting jobs.

First Source presents a model to get employers to pull from a pool and there is a huge waiting list, comprised mostly of immigrants. First source doesn't train, they stabilize the situation. They coach, resume write and analyze sectors, e.g., hospitality, and tried to get folks into the Green Line extension construction jobs. The City of Cambridge has 13 staff members working on workforce development. Alderman Lafuente asked if the people being trained are employed or unemployed and what kind of jobs are being trained for and was told that training is for all types of jobs and for immigrants with advanced degrees and people with barriers. Alderman Lafuente asked why the city trade school isn't involved. Mr. Galligani spoke about how the vocational school can help non-students and said that some are being trained in the machine shop. Mr. Glavin said the economic development team was successful in getting state support for the training in the high school.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

200135: That the Administration report to this Board about communicating with Federal Realty Investment Trust regarding #199601, a request that FRIT provide the wages, hours and residency of everyone employed at the parcel 6 site, pursuant to the attached letter from Rand Wilson.

Chairman Niedergang asked if the administration could respond to Mr. Wilson's letter dated 7/17/15 and Mr. Galligani said that he is waiting for a response from Federal Realty (FRIT). Alderman Ballantyne said every effort should be made to look at this from a holistic point of

view, adding that there must be a dialogue to make everyone performing construction to use union labor. Alderman Lafuente said that this letter requires a very simple answer from FRIT. He doesn't believe every job has to be union, but large projects should be. He said that in the future, any large project should always be a union job. Alderman Lafuente said that in Assembly Square, you can see that the units built by union workers are of better quality than the non-union projects. Chairman Niedergang said that projects built with government subsidies should be union. Mr. Lister said that the city agreed to a Project Labor Agreement before the economy went bad. FRIT hired a new liason who ignored the agreement with the mayor. He said FRIT cries about the union being too expensive, noting that the condos at Assembly Square are selling for \$1,000 per square foot. He said that FRIT is laughing all the way back to Maryland.

Mr. Wilson said that there is a fear the project will be completed before an answer is received from FRIT. He said he is a shareholder of FRIT and that it is a great stock. Mr. Wilson explained that transparency on who is being hired and the wages being paid can help elected officials draw conclusions about the developer. He spoke about local hiring, fair wages and health and safety, adding that the beauty of the union is that it creates a grassroots movement to point out inequities.

Alderman Lafuente said that FRIT can't be made to use union, but the letter should be answered because it is easy to answer. Mr. Lister said the next time, the city should hold their feet to the fire. Alderman Ballantyne asked if the city had any leverage and Chairman Niedergang believes that FRIT cannot be compelled to provide the information.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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201791: That the City Clerk notify Greentown Labs to appear before this Board to describe its selection of contractors and plans for local hiring in its upcoming construction project.

Chairman Niedergang reported that Tom Bent's union shop is doing work at the space.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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202715: That the Director of SPCD share with this Board a marketing plan for commercial development, highlighting the transformative districts.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202149: That the Administration discuss requiring adding the word "Somerville" to buildings in the Assembly Square area, to enhance office and commercial marketing efforts.

Mr. Glavin said signage is always reviewed by the city and this could be promoted, but not required, adding that Assembly Square has done a good job of promoting Somerville. Alderman Ballantyne said Partners doesn't pay taxes and that their garage should highlight that it is in Somerville.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE