



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

March 15, 2022

REPORT OF THE EQUITY, GENDER, SENIORS, FAMILIES
AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Beatriz GomezMouakad	Chair	Present	
Judy PinedaNeufeld	Vice Chair	Present	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Hannah Carrillo-Mayor’s Office, David Shapiro-City Solicitor’s Office, Chief of Police Charles Femino, Ashley Speliotis-Council on Aging, Denis Taylor-Communications and Denise Capers-Racial and Social Justice

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Chairperson Gomez Mouakad and adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Equity

212952: That the Administration create a plan for accessibility of virtual public meetings during the 2022 COVID pandemic surge to address how those without internet access may participate.

The chair read items 2 and 3 together since they are related.

Director Taylor stated it’s a priority for the administration and have been asked to review all policies and protocol for virtual and community meetings. Director Taylor stated the review is done with an interdepartmental team. The review is to immediately to overcome existing barriers, always looking at areas for participation and look at the range of ways to engage the community. This is to provide channels for the community to participate because not everyone will come to a meeting and should have access to the meetings. Throughout the pandemic, the communications team has been very focused on keeping people alive, healthy and vaccinated. The 311 Call Center is always available to assist the community when a meeting is happening. They are establishing clear protocol on how to promote outreach, to make use of the various platforms, interpretation standards, standards for developing hybrid meetings and establishing kits for training materials. The 311 team is very close to hiring a community outreach coordinator to help promote all of these areas. Libraries will be included on the list for the community to use computers.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld would like some standards or guidelines to have continuity when meetings are happening. Additionally, Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if community meetings

could use Zoom for translations. Director Taylor talked about the interpretations feature and that they are trying to get all staff to use Zoom. She also suggested using Zoom meetings since it may be easier for public meetings for the councilors.

Chair Gomez Mouakad stated that the hosting developer meetings and the city should start providing the link for neighborhood meetings. Director Taylor will reach out to the City Solicitor to find out if the developer can use city resources to make sure the community is aware of any meetings.

Councilor Strezo asked Director Taylor if the community could get alerts to sign up about specific meetings. She also asked about tablets for seniors for \$10.00 and if this is still available. Director Taylor stated there are programs offered through internet providers for laptops and very low-cost internet services.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

212967: That the Director of Communications report on measures that could be taken to provide more equitable and consistent access to online public meetings.

Director Taylor stated the administration is focused on this matter. They are developing plans and protocols working with an interdepartmental team. There are COVID ambassadors to promote COVID recovery that are multilingual teams that meet residents where they are and flyer the community. The outreach is really critical to access online meetings.

Chair Gomez Mouakad referenced a comment from a community member that the presentation at the community meeting on 90 Washington was too complicated to understand.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

213183: That the Director of Communications begin updating community bulletin boards with this Council's calendar.

Director Taylor stated they need to engage the city clerk on using flyers and get a better understanding of the protocol on how to make flyers happen.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

213285: That the Director of Racial and Social Justice and the Director of Communications update this Council on the strategy to address digital equity in our city.

Director Taylor stated this has been a priority for some time. The library has been involved along with the Councilor on Aging on training. Communications team offered various training, as well. The directors of OSPCD, Communication and Racial and Social Justice talked a lot about the digital divide and established a Digital Bridge Coordinator to have someone focused on advancing this work. The coordinator would advance policy and grant seeking work funded through ARPA. The position is slated to be filled in OSPCD. This would be a two-year position and reevaluated at that time.

Director Capers stated there has been an intentional outreach in multiple ways. Looking at statistics, 81% Americans have smart phones with no guaranteed internet. Seventy-five percent

have access to broadband internet but that does not mean they have reliable service. She stated that 1 in 4 people do not have reliable access to internet.

Director Taylor stated they are hiring Digital Equity Planner first to supervise and oversee the Digital Bridge Coordinator.

Chair Gomez Mouakad stated that sometimes translations on the website may not be accurate. She also referenced a student form that was not translated properly. She wants to make sure there is quality control process for translations. The forms need to be simplified as much as possible.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld stated that since the Green Line is opening soon, there should be free access to the internet for the city.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

Families and Vulnerable Populations

213113: That the Chief of Police and the Director of Racial and Social Justice report on the city's policy for traffic stops for undocumented immigrants.

Chief Femino stated this was discussed in 2019 when the Welcoming committee was passed and the ordinance was conveyed to the Somerville Police Department. He stated that practices were put into place but did not formalize as policy. It is now formalized and mirrors what was put in place in 2019. When stopping a driver who does not have a driver's license, there is no arrest made but summoned to court. The police department tries to park the car legally and decide for someone to come to the scene to drive the car away rather tow the vehicle. Usually there is a diverse group working at the police department and they will be called to provide translations either over the phone or through the dispatcher. The police department explains the rights to the individual, how they can appeal the summons and to appear before the court.

Director Capers stated she looked into the policy of the police department and the Somerville police department is handling the process according to best practice for sanctuary cities. The Chief and Director Capers have discussed the Welcome ordinance will be made into a webinar and will be accessible to the public. Chief Femino stated they have been working together and discussed how to create webinars in different languages to help the community understand the process. This also includes how to get a license.

There is a new policy that the police department has new officers go through a 8-12 week field training and then given the requirement to read all policies of the department which includes the policy of ICE and how the city cooperates with ICE. Chief Femino stated that Somerville Police Department will implement an annual two-hour in-service training regarding immigrant rights. He also created an ICE form that will be used soon.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked about the exposure of the individual when they leave the courthouse. Chief Femino noted this is under the state jurisdiction but could discuss implementing a MOU with the state. Chief Feminio also noted the Welcoming Ordinance requires reporting every six months on any immigration/ICE arrests. These reports are given to the council and the mayor. Somerville Police Department will be submitting these reports. Chair Gomez Mouakad suggested educating our community about the Welcoming City to help residents understand they have rights.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

213247: That the Chief of Police provide this Council, in writing, data from FY 2021 for all traffic citations, outcomes of those citations, and any collected demographic data.

Chief Police would like more time to answer this question.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

213053: That the Director of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with SomerViva, provide a plan for preventive medicine clinics for immigrant communities.

No department head was available to attend tonight's meeting.

Councilor Strezo suggested our community partners get involved such as Tufts, CHA, Partners and others. Councilor Pineda Neufeld offered to get involved in gathering groups to assist with this effort, as she did with the beginning of the pandemic.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

213062: That this City Council work with the Administration to explore an internship program for high school students.

Ms. Carrillo stated the administration will provide written responses in the coming week or so.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

213063: That this City Council work with the Administration and School District on a year-round expansion of a summer jobs internship program with a focus on addressing Out of School Time.

Ms. Carrillo stated the administration will provide written responses in the coming week or so.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

213187: That the Administration provide this Council with an update on the current status of the Young Somerville Advisory Group.

Ms. Carrillo stated the administration will provide some written responses in the coming week or so.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

213250: Requiring disclaimers or signs for Unlicensed Pregnancy Centers.

Councilor Strezo stated that Somerville does not have a crisis pregnancy center. The ordinance will protect our residents and anyone who walks through the doors. She would like to consider enforcing the authority through ISD.

Councilor Strezo motioned and it was approved that the assistant city solicitor update this ordinance to include language that puts the enforcing authority for Inspectional Services Division and be prepared for a presentation at the next City Council meeting on March 24th.

RESULT:	APPROVED AS AMENDED. [UNANIMOUS]
AYES:	GomezMouakad, PinedaNeufeld, Strezo

Seniors

213061: That the Director of Health and Human Services discuss an updated long-term plan for aging in place for residents 65 and over.

Director Speliotis talked about aging in place as the ability to stay safely in their homes or wherever the individual chooses as they age with safety and support from the community. They have a program starting at age 65 to find out what it means to work with elder services and what happens if there is a crisis at home, how to know when assistant living is right for the individual. There are seminars and programs to assist the community.

Council on Aging has outreach positions who work in the centers to host meals, social workers who are independently licensed and are case managers. There are approximately 10 people in Council on Aging. They also have resources to navigate in the community and help with food stamps. They work with Somerville Cambridge Elder Service which is used when you find yourself unable to leave your home, need meal preparation and other services. Council on Aging works to get individuals out into the community. Many seniors are able to get out to apply for food stamps.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

213067: That the Mayor create a Senior Liaison within the Executive Office to advocate on behalf of Somerville residents aged 65 and older.

Director Speliotis advocates for seniors everyday and the more voices out there, the better. They are really focused on hearing the voices of the community and the seniors.

Councilor Strezo stated the goal of this position would be for the future of seniors aging in place. She would like the Mayor's office to respond directly to this item.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

213068: That the Director of the Council on Aging discuss a plan to allow seniors to be bussed to city events, including on evenings and weekends.

Director Speliotis stated they received a grant for seniors to get to the grocery store and other areas. In addition to the ARPA funding, if the senior eats a meal with them, then they will receive transportation. They have a small amount of funding for the Council of Aging that is used in the community.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

213069: That the Executive Director of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development and the Director of Health and Human Services discuss a re-assessment to determine if Somerville is in compliance with its 2018 designation as an AARP Age-Friendly Community.

Director Speliotis stated that an age friendly program has a guideline for a community to age in place for people over 60. They have a health and wellness coordinator who attends the meetings and make sure Somerville is following the program. They partnered with Tufts who has group sessions and have applied for ARPA funding to expand the number of seniors they are able to service.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

213099: Residents submitting comments re: establishment of a special subcommittee to focus on the issues and concerns of older adults.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

Reference Material:

- Enforcement of Federal Immigration final 3-15-2022 (with 213113)