



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 28, 2023

7:00 PM

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 7:06 PM by Chair Pineda Neufeld and adjourned at 8:07 PM on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Wilson, Strezo, Burnley, Clingan and Pineda Neufeld), none against and none absent.

Others present:

Cathy Piantigini – Library Director, Charles Breen – Chief Fire Engineer, Chris Major – Deputy Chief – SFD, Anne Gill – Director of Human Resources, Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Judy Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Jesse Clingan, Willie Burnley Jr., Kristen Strezo and Jake Wilson

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-0446](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee Meeting of March 15, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0376](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Michael Smith to the Public Library Board of Trustees.

Director Piantigini introduced the candidate, Michael Smith, who has lived in Somerville for 8 years and has experience with public procurement, program management, and administrative/regulatory law. Mr. Smith told the committee that he has been attending the trustees' meetings for the past several months and that he's looking forward to learning how he can contribute as a member of the Board of Trustees. He commented that many people aren't aware of the services provided by the libraries, such as the pass program for local museums, and he thinks that making the public aware of the library's digital offerings would be helpful.

Chair Pineda Neufeld explained that the appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council at its next meeting on April 13th.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: Vice Chair Clingan and City Councilor At Large Strezo

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0439](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Michael Santangelo to the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Resolution (ID # [23-0241](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Burnley Jr. That the Administration update this Council's Committee on Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters regarding efforts to hire more firefighters.

Items 23-0241 and 23-0242 were discussed together.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Resolution (ID # [23-0242](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Burnley Jr. That the Administration inform this Council regarding efforts to update the firefighter hiring process, since the reserve list has been eliminated.

Items 23-0241 and 23-0242 were discussed together.

Liaison Carrillo stated that the administration recognizes the urgency of having positions in the department filled quickly, especially with the planned station for Assembly Square. Along those lines, the city will now include positions to fill upcoming vacancies that will be created by mandatory retirement when calling for a Civil Service list, rather than waiting for an actual retirement to occur.

Deputy Chief Majors gave an overview of the Civil Service hiring process, noting that it's lengthy, therefore, the more candidates there are, the longer the process. He said that the current wait time for entry into the state's Fire Academy is 6-8 months and he noted that some municipalities have their own fire training facilities and that the SFD is always looking for openings in one of them. There is no cost to the city to have fire fighters trained at the state academy vs. a cost of \$5,000 per fire fighter at a local training facility.

Councilor Wilson asked about outreach efforts to get diverse applicants and Chief Breen said that the department tries to use fire fighters to attend various meetings of diverse groups in order to make them aware of opportunities in the department. Director Gill commented that the city is always making efforts to recruit people and also relies on internal staff to reach out to groups and conduct job fairs. Councilor Wilson suggested coordinating efforts with the Office of Racial and Social Justice. Councilor Wilson noted that some elements of the Civil Service process, including the physical, are difficult and he asked what the city could do to help diverse applicants to pass. Deputy Chief Major said that Civil Service does provide information to candidates about what they need to do to prepare for tests. Additionally, he pointed out that there are various Civil Service lists that

may be used, e.g., permanent, reserve, lateral/transfer, language, and gender, and he noted that the bar is set very high to get approval from Civil Service to use the language list. Councilor Clingan asked about a cadet program to give people an idea of what a fire fighting job is like and Deputy Chief Major replied that it's very time consuming and that the city hasn't had such a program.

Liaison Carrillo informed the committee that the administration is ready to request a Civil Service list next week. The timeline for opening the Assembly Square station has been pushed back to August 2024 and the number of fire fighter positions for that location has yet to be determined. Liaison Carrillo stated that every option is being considered and that the City Council will be kept in the loop.

Councilors Clingan and Wilson and Chair Pineda Neufeld urged the administration to forego lateral transfers and stick to the normal Civil Service process.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED