



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Public Utilities and Public Works Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 10, 2025

6:00 PM

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Clingan and adjourned at 7:27 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors McLaughlin, Scott and Clingan), none against and none absent.

Others present:

Nick Antanavica – Director of Inspectional Services, Commissioner Jill Lathan – DPW, Kimberly Hutter – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott and Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1767](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Public Utilities and Public Works Committee Meeting of December 9, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, Ward Two City Councilor Scott and Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin

2. Order (ID # [25-0121](#))
By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Strezo, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Sait
That the Director of Water and Sewer appear before this Council to address resident claims that newly installed water meters are falsely registering air pockets in residential cold water lines as leaks, leading to significantly inaccurate bills.

Liaison Hutter reported that a meeting was held with Councilor Ewen-Campen, and city staff to identify possible issues and to collaborate with the vendor to fully assess the situation and remedy any problems found. Councilor Scott commented that his understanding is that it might be more fundamental than just an installation problem and asked if the city sees it as an isolated incident, to which Liaison Hutter replied that the city is trying to discern that. Councilor Scott related that a constituent was told by Water Department staff that there were no reports of problems with the meters. Councilor Scott subsequently called the Water Department and was told the same thing. He was also informed by staff that if a customer believes there is a problem with a meter, the city will do nothing about it until spring and the customer would be responsible for the cost of checking the meter. Councilor Scott commented that he thinks there should be a way for the city

to determine how many meters are defective. Chair Clingan noted that there is a change in the Water Departments' administration.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order
(ID # [25-0093](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Commissioner of Public Works update this Council on the use of beet juice to address ice and snow during winter storms.

Commissioner Lathan reported that the beet juice slows the freezing of the salt brine, (a mixture of salt and water), and lowers the amount of salt needed, with the goal of trying to lessen the city's dependence on salt, however, it's ineffective on slushy or rainy surfaces. Councilor McLaughlin asked about the environmental impact of using this product and Commissioner Lathan noted that less salt use is better for the environment but that data is still being collected on its effectiveness. Councilor McLaughlin also inquired if rats like beet juice and the Commissioner stated that they have not noticed an increase of rats. Chair Clingan asked if the solution is noticeable on the roadways and was told that although the solution is red it would be hard to see on the roadways. Commissioner Lathan explained that only the city's DPW trucks are employing the brining system and that it's being used on main streets and cross roads at this time.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Order
(ID # [25-0092](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Commissioner of Public Works address maintenance issues within 165 Broadway.

Commissioner Lathan explained that her department reviewed the issues reported to 311 and took action to correct those problems. She informed the committee that the facility is unkempt and has multiple instances of damage, none of which were reported to 311, and that the kitchen area was unsanitary. She went on to explain that DPW staff is responsible for trash removal but not for stewardship of spaces, i.e., cleaning the kitchen. Further inspection of the building showed a blocked fire escape exit and piles of boxes. The office space is in disarray and is under the purview of HHS. Once the area is cleaned and organized, DPW staff will return to move the boxes to another storage space. Chair Clingan asked for the 311 list and the remedies taken.

Councilor McLaughlin noted his concern about ADA accessibility and he commented on a bathroom that has 2 toilets without a partition between them and he would like a partition installed and Commissioner Lathan stated that she would follow up on that request tomorrow. Chair Clingan commented that the building needs some TLC and said tenants should be

encouraged to call 311 when there is a problem. He also noted that HHS is in charge of this building and he asked who the point person is for one of the tenants (Project Soup), adding that HHS should make tenants aware of their stewardship responsibilities.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [25-0091](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Commissioner of Public Works clear the second floor of 165 Broadway of unused city materials to expand building uses for Teen Empowerment.

Councilor McLaughlin commented that this is taking up space that could be used for Teen Empowerment and he would like to know what the obstacles are in moving the files. Liaison Hutter said the process is underway to clear out the documents that are there but she can't speak to the future use of the space. Chair Clingan read a response (referenced below) from HHS regarding this matter.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Order
(ID # [25-0090](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Director of the Arts Council work with Teen Empowerment and other related city agencies to develop youth-led murals within the walls of 165 Broadway.

Liaison Hutter reported that the Arts Council would be happy to work with an artist on this matter. She also explained that DPW staff would need to work with the non profit to identify areas of the building that may be painted. Councilor Scott commented that this type of situation is normally handled under the terms of a lease and he asked if a lease exists. Liaison Hutter did not know the arrangements between the non profits at this site and the city but will get the answer and report back to the committee. Councilor McLaughlin would like to find out if leases or MOUs exist for Teen Empowerment and Project Soup before speaking with the non profits and he would like to sit with a city staff person to help facilitate this item. Chair Clingan commented that a determination needs to be made regarding who would be doing the painting.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [25-0089](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator provide an estimate for the costs of upgrading 165 Broadway for ADA compliance.

Discussed with Item# 25-0088.

Liaison Hutter spoke with IAM staff and told the committee that the last estimate, (from 2021), was \$15 million for the elevator and work to achieve ADA compliance. She noted the high dollar amount and said that the city has many old buildings and that this one is on a list of buildings that need improvement. Chair Clingan commented that \$500,000 in CPA funds were previously provided to a religious temple in the city for an elevator and he's wondering what's going to be done for \$15 million. Councilor Scott asked Liaison Hutter to provide the written estimate to the committee to see exactly what's included. Councilor McLaughlin explained that that Teen Empowerment is not allowed to count their community events towards their grant application and he wants to know what the ADA requirement is that is preventing them from doing so. Liaison Hutter will bring question back to staff to get an answer.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

8. Resolution
(ID # [25-0088](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Administration prioritize 165 Broadway for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance to ensure full use of youth-related activities in the building.

Discussed with Item# 25-0089.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

9. Order
(ID # [25-0035](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Inspectional Services and the Commissioner of Public Works discuss how uncleared and/or unsalted sidewalks and driveways are addressed and fined after it snows, including how much staff it takes to address community reports of uncleared private property.

Director Antanavica said a standard enforcement pattern is used with a typically threshold of 2" or more of snow. The city's ordinance allows for 6 hours of daylight after a storm to clear sidewalks and Director Antanavica stated that ISD sends out the deadline for snow clearing to 311 for publication. Checking for uncleared sidewalks start with critical areas of the city, areas around schools, enhanced enforcement areas, places of assembly, nursing homes and complaints received. He noted that the city has no authority over driveways, etc., on private property, however, if a tenant experiences a dangerous condition on their property, ISD could issue fines for unsafe conditions to the property owner. Currently, ISD has 7-10 people inspecting for cleared sidewalks. Chair Clingan would like to see a written snow procedure from ISD.

Councilor Scott commented about 2 locations on Washington Street that have been ticketed for snow/ice conditions and said that one of the locations

apparently does not have a listed address and Director Antanavica will have ISD staff determine the correct address. Chair Clingan asked about warnings being given and Director Antanavica stated that everyone knows the rules and the expectations, so no warnings are given. He noted that approximately 100 tickets were issued today and that fine amounts vary according to the seriousness of the infraction and whether the property is residential or commercial. Tickets are mailed and door hanger notifications of tickets issued are placed on a door of the property. Chair Clingan asked about a process for elderly homeowners who have nobody to help them and also about an appeal process. Director Antanavica replied that everything is appealable. He also noted that the property addresses of those working with the youth shoveling program are not ticketed. Chair Clingan briefly mentioned a pilot program where clearing snow is done by the city with the property owners being ticketed.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- PUPW - 2025-02-10 Memo (with 25-0091)