



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Rodent Issues Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 30, 2025

6:00 PM

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 6:47 PM on a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilors Burnley and Wilson), none against and 1 absent (Councilor McLaughlin).

Others present:

Alicia Privett - Environmental Health Coordinator, Colin Ziegler - Environmental Health Manager.
Nick Antanavica – Director of Inspectional Services, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin and City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr.

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [25-0289](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Rodent Issues Special Committee Meeting of February 19, 2025.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin

2. Order
(ID # [25-0243](#))

By Councilor Wilson

That the Director of Communications and Community Engagement update this Council on efforts to educate the public about preventing conditions conducive to growth of the rodent population.

Items 25-0243, 25-0244 and 25-0245 were discussed together.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order
(ID # [25-0244](#))

By Councilor Wilson

That the Director of Inspectional Services update this Council on efforts around enforcement of rodent-related ordinances, including the number of complaints, inspections, warnings, and fines issued for vegetation and trash violations.

Items 25-0243, 25-0244 and 25-0245 were discussed together.

Environmental Health Coordinator Privett and Environmental Health Manager Ziegler gave an update on rodent activity and mitigation and

reported that rat data is lower, in part, due to the time of year, i.e., colder weather when activity is lower. A heat map of the Quarter 1 (Q1) period for 2025 was introduced that showed a decline in numbers from 2023. 270 properties participated in the Residential Rodent Assistance Program, accounting for 1,080 visits. The data for Q1 shows that the highest category of violations is for residential trash, followed by commercial trash, with commercial trash having the highest rate of repeat offenses.

Councilor Burnley asked if violations are being tracked for changed behaviors and Ms. Previtt said that it is not being tracked but could be parsed out of the available data. She noted that fines for trash violations are on an increasing scale and that when the fines reach the 3rd offense, people take notice and change unwanted behavior. Mr. Ziegler reviewed the new school inspection procedure recently implemented and explained that ISD and the DPW have partnered to develop Integrated Pest Management (IPM) based approaches. Complaints are filed through CitizenServe which allows for progress monitoring and updating of school personnel. Submitted complaints are funneled to both ISD and the DPW. Asked about rat borrows, Mr. Ziegler stated that he collapses any external burrows that he finds while the DPW or pest contractor deals with burrows inside of buildings, as it requires additional attention. He noted that schools have improved upon problems with food being left behind and/or not being securely contained.

The committee also received an update on the Rodent Fertility Control Study and Ms. Previtt noted that 14 properties have signed up to test bait stations and people have volunteered to help with the baiting. Mr. Ziegler reported that in 2024 it was determined that the city was incorrectly operating the SMART program which resulted in less captures. In 2022, the focus was in Davis Square and multiple captures were seen, however for the 60 boxes deployed in 2024, just 377 captures were recorded. That number was disappointing, so the boxes will be deployed in commercial areas only going forward. Councilor Burnley commented on seeing families of rats in Magoun Square and asked what measures are being implemented for the hearts of squares. Mr. Ziegler said that he would be happy to work person to person with local businesses and said that for residential programs, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide (dry ice) applications are going to begin during the summer on qualifying residential properties.

Mr. Ziegler reported that the IPM plan is updated every 2-3 years and that a report is due out this fall. Among the projects completed were the development of signage regarding bird feeding, discontinuing the use of SGARs, making recommendations for community gardens, an annual communication plan, compost/gardening guide, creating property profiles, expanded and improved the residential program and altered pest control requirements for construction, demo and vacancy permits. Councilor Burnley asked when the composting pilot program would begin and Ms.

Previtt said that it's her understanding that it will kick off sometime this summer. Councilors McLaughlin, Burnley and Chair Wilson all expressed their thanks for the work being done and the progress being made.

Director Antanivica reported that ISD is working on using collected data to implement a change to the license fee structure for restaurants, so that instead of being based on the number of seats, it will be based on risk to the city which will take into account rodents and trash problems. Councilor Burnley inquired about replacing worn trash receptacles and Director Antanavica encouraged people to call the DPW when bins show signs of damage, and he noted that there may be a wait until a replacement becomes available.

Chair Wilson inquired about compliance follow up for rodent control at construction sites and Director Antanavica said it's an evolving process and that Ms. Previtt and Mr. Ziegler have been added to the permitting route to confirm that plans are in place. Mr. Ziegler commented that frequency documentation needs to be included when filing for permits.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Order
(ID # [25-0245](#))

By Councilor Wilson

That the Environmental Health Manager update this Council on rodent activity data and rodent mitigation efforts, including any novel approaches under consideration or being utilized.

Items 25-0243, 25-0244 and 25-0245 were discussed together.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- Rodent Issues - 2025-04-30 Rodent Control Update and Practices (with 25-2444, 25-2245)