



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Public Health and Public Safety Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 1, 2026

6:30 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair McLaughlin at 6:33 pm and adjourned at 8:58 pm on a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilors Clingan and McLaughlin), 0 opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Strezo).

Also present: James Donovan — Somerville Police Department Deputy Chief, Amanda Nagim-Williams — Director of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA), Denise Taylor — Director of Communications and Public Engagement, Sean Tierney — Assistant Fire Chief, Brad Rawson — Director of Mobility, Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development (OSPCD), Anne Gill — Director of Human Resources, Salvy Cicero — Crossing Guard Supervisor, Michael Holland — Somerville Police Lieutenant, Karin Carroll — Director of Health and Human Services, Jon Hillman — Public Safety for All Project Manager and Delaney Fisher-Cassiol — Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

Present: Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan and Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin
Absent: City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [25-1709](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Public Health and Public Safety Committee Meeting of October 30, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**
AYE: Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin
ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo

2. Committee Minutes
(ID # [25-1855](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Rodent Issues Special Committee Meeting of December 1, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**
AYE: Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin
ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo

3. Resolution
(ID # [26-1018](#))

By Councilor Hardt and Councilor Mbah
That the Chief of Police report to this Council on the response to the recent upsurge in drug use and other drug-related activity in public spaces in and around Davis Square, including in Hodgkins-Curtin park.

Deputy Chief James Donovan reported that the Police Department has deployed resources to Davis Square and noted that conditions have improved significantly. He stated that Cars 5, 6, and 7 are actively monitoring the area, with ongoing enforcement efforts that have resulted in multiple arrests related to drug use. Deputy Chief Donovan also noted the presence of plainclothes officers and detectives in the area and encouraged constituents to contact the Police Department with any concerns. Chair McLaughlin noted that he has observed improvements in the area.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Resolution
(ID # [26-0972](#))

By Councilor Sait, Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Mbah
That the Administration address the ongoing public health and safety concerns at the Broadway Salvation Army site.

Councilor Sait noted that residents have raised concerns about conditions at the property for several years, describing it as a public health and safety issue. She stated that the site has become an overnight gathering place where arguments, fights, drinking, and public urination occur. Abutters have reported observing the same individuals returning nightly to take donated items and resell them.

Deputy Chief James Donovan explained that the Police Department addressed similar concerns last year and that representatives from the Salvation Army indicated the primary issue was illegal dumping rather than theft. He noted that installing security cameras had previously been discussed but has not yet occurred and suggested that additional lighting, fencing, and signage could help deter activity. Deputy Chief Donovan reported that officers responded to the location approximately 75 times during evening hours in June and emphasized that a collaborative approach is needed. He encouraged residents to call 911 if they witness illegal activity, noted that an egress at the rear of the property limits security, and stated that an employee now remains on site for several hours after closing while a truck removes illegally dumped items each morning. Amanda Nagim Williams, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA), reported that Somerville's Inspectional Services Division has been coordinating with Medford's ISD, which anticipated increased activity during peak moving season. She noted that Medford ISD issued a citation in early June and that most of the affected area, including the donation drop-off location, is within Medford.

Councilor Clingan recommended installing two-way cameras, improved lighting, and motion-activated cameras to discourage unwanted activity. Deputy Chief Donovan stated that he would provide an update after meeting with representatives from the Salvation Army and explained that the property's occupancy permit is issued by Somerville. Councilor Sait concluded that installing a fence should be the minimum corrective measure

and also suggested adding signage stating that mattresses are not accepted.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Resolution
(ID # [26-0944](#))

By Councilor Scott

That the Chief of Police provide documentation in writing regarding the circumstances surrounding cyclist traffic enforcement in Union Square on the morning of May 28.

Michael Holland, Police Lieutenant, reported that there was a request for new light enforcement in Union Square during rush hour traffic. He noted that five stops were conducted, including one vehicle stop and four bicycle stops, all of which resulted in written warnings. Lieutenant Holland stated that the enforcement was carried out during a regular traffic enforcement shift.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Public
Communication
(ID # [26-0914](#))

Christopher Rosol submitting comments re: off leash dogs.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

7. Resolution
(ID # [26-0838](#))

By Councilor Link and Councilor Clingan

That the Chief Information Officer provide this Council with a summary report on the current accessibility status of city-operated digital properties including websites, platforms, and portals, and share any plans to ensure new properties comply with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) using principles like “accessibility-first design.”

This item was discussed with item #26-0824.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Resolution
(ID # [26-0825](#))

By Councilor Strezo and Councilor Clingan

That the Administration submit a written report to this Council regarding the timeline and process for staffing the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Coordinator role and update this Council on the plan to process ADA complaints and accessibility coordination when this position is vacant.

Amanda Nagim-Williams, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA), reviewed the attachment *PHPS - 2026-07-01 ADA Coordinator Update (with 26-0825)*. She reported that phone screenings for the ADA Coordinator position are underway and that first-round interviews will follow. In response to a question from Councilor Clingan, Director Nagim Williams clarified that the position will conduct Human Resources-focused investigations rather than serving as a Racial and Social Justice investigator.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

9. Resolution
(ID # [26-0824](#))

By Councilor Strezo and Councilor Clingan

That the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator submit a written report to this City Council regarding the timeline for ADA Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 under Title II, and the plan for its completion.

Councilor Clingan noted that the item serves as an internal audit to ensure the City is meeting web accessibility standards wherever possible.

Denise Taylor, Director of Communications and Public Engagement, provided an update on the City's compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) for the Somerville website and two City applications. Director Taylor reported that accessibility has been an ongoing effort and that the City has achieved 92% compliance with WCAG Level A and 94% compliance with Level AA standards, exceeding the 90% compliance threshold while continuing to work toward 100%. She highlighted improvements including alternative text, color contrast, font sizing, and plain language enhancements to better serve users with visual, cognitive, and mobility disabilities. Director Taylor also noted that the City recently implemented DocAccess, a tool that converts PDFs into screen reader-accessible HTML. She added that the 2.5-member web team works on accessibility daily, supported by an in-house tool that identifies issues requiring attention, and that the City previously hired an outside consultant to achieve compliance ahead of the most recent deadline.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED10. Resolution
(ID # [26-0708](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Wheeler and Councilor Hardt

That the Commissioner of Public Works invest in trash barrels with latches to address rodent issues.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE11. Resolution
(ID # [26-0647](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Administration update this Council on the ordering and maintenance of firefighter equipment such as fire engines, ladder trucks and all other fire apparatus.

Sean Tierney, Assistant Fire Chief, reported that all frontline apparatus are currently in service, including two engines, two ladder trucks, and one rescue vehicle. He noted that Engine 5 was recently delivered, another apparatus is expected by the end of the month, a heavy rescue vehicle is scheduled for delivery in 2027, Engine 1 is expected in January 2027, Ladder 2 in June 2027, and a new command vehicle is on order. Assistant Fire Chief Tierney added that delivery times for new apparatus have

increased to approximately 2.5 to 3 years from the time of ordering.

In response to a question from Chair McLaughlin about whether traffic calming measures have affected fire apparatus, Assistant Fire Chief Tierney said the department does not currently track that data, but response time data has not shown a measurable impact from slowing down for speed bumps. He reported that the department has spent approximately \$100,000 on vehicle maintenance over the past several months and that the past year has seen the highest maintenance costs to date. He also confirmed that the department is fully equipped and that no firefighters are lacking necessary gear or equipment. Councilor Clingan suggested tracking maintenance data.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

12. Public
Communication
(ID # [26-0493](#))

Gilman Square Neighborhood Council submitting comments re: McGrath Boulevard.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

13. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [26-0348](#))

Conveying Public Safety for All findings and current initiatives.

This item was discussed with item #26-0243.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

14. Order
(ID # [26-0243](#))

By Councilor Link, Councilor Mbah and Councilor Scott
That the Director of Racial and Social Justice provide an update to this Council on the status of the Police Civilian Oversight Committee.

Jon Hillman, Public Safety for All Project Manager, reviewed the attachment *PHPS - 2026-07-01 PSFA Findings Memo (with 26-0348).pdf* and discussed the history of the Public Safety for All initiative, which began in September 2022. He explained that the process included a community survey, the creation of the Public Safety for All Task Force, Civilian Oversight Task Force, and Anti-Violence Working Group, and the development of recommendations presented in February 2025. Manager Hillman then provided updates on current initiatives, including the co-response pilot program, body-worn camera implementation, development of a hub model for cross-departmental public safety collaboration, establishment of a Police Accountability Board, and ongoing community engagement to advance the initiative.

Amanda Nagim-Williams, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA), clarified that the administration's goal is to establish the Police

Accountability Board at the beginning of calendar year 2027. Director Nagim Williams noted that, before then, the City hopes to adopt an ordinance outlining the board's purpose, functions, composition, and responsibilities.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

15. Resolution
(ID # [26-0125](#))

By Councilor Strezo, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Link, Councilor Mbah, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Sait and Councilor Wheeler

That the City Council calls for an end to period poverty, and an end to barriers making it difficult for residents to be able to afford menstrual products in Somerville.

This item was discussed with item #26-0098.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

16. Resolution
(ID # [26-0108](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Commissioner of Public Works install privacy film and replace the shades of the women's bathroom on the second floor of City Hall.

Amanda Nagim-Williams, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA), noted that this was completed in February 2026.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

17. Resolution
(ID # [26-0106](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Davis

That the Administration provide monthly updates to the Committee on Public Health and Public Safety on progress towards addressing homelessness in Somerville.

Karin Carroll, Director of Health and Human Services, reviewed the attachment *PHPS - 2026-07-01 Homelessness Memo (with 26-0106).pdf* and highlighted the City's response to extreme heat, including expanded access to water and the planned rollout of Until Help Arrives training to equip community members with emergency response skills. In response to a question from Chair McLaughlin about evening cooling centers in Davis Square, Director Carroll noted that no extended periods of dangerously high overnight temperatures were forecast for the current week but that staff continue to monitor conditions.

In response to a question from Councilor Clingan, Director Carroll explained that the City's most accurate count of unhoused individuals is the annual Point-in-Time count conducted during the winter and that population estimates are more difficult throughout the rest of the year. She noted that City staff hold regular coordination meetings to discuss new encampments and reports of unhoused individuals, while the Somerville Homeless

Coalition assists with housing applications. Director Carroll added that unattended belongings are tagged and, if unclaimed after 72 hours, are transferred to the Somerville Homeless Coalition. Councilor Clingan emphasized the committee's continued commitment to addressing homelessness and requested that future reports include additional information on program successes and outcome statistics.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

18. Resolution
(ID # [26-0099](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Health and Human Services immediately install menstrual product dispensers on each floor of City Hall that provide free menstrual products.

This item was discussed with item #26-0098.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

19. Resolution
(ID # [26-0098](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Health and Human Services immediately install menstrual product dispensers that provide free menstrual products in all city owned bathrooms.

Karin Carroll, Director of Health and Human Services, noted that menstrual products can cost up to \$13 per month and are not covered by SNAP benefits. She reported that the City launched a pilot program two years ago at six locations to provide free period product dispensers. Director Carroll stated that dispensers were installed in all three City Hall bathrooms approximately four months ago through a contract with Citron. She added that Somerville Public Schools have multiple locations with dispensers or nurse-provided products, which are maintained by custodial staff. She also noted that several other City-owned properties include dispensers, libraries operate through separate vendors, and two public health vending machines also provide products.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

20. Resolution
(ID # [26-0057](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Human Resources and the Chief of Police work with state officials to provide crossing guards on McGrath Highway.

Salvy Cicero, Crossing Guard Supervisor, explained that McGrath Highway is a state roadway and is staffed by two state-employed crossing guards. He noted that pedestrians can also use the Otis Street overpass to cross safely and that crossing guards are assigned to assist students ages 13 and under. Supervisor Cicero reported that he monitored the location during the morning hours and observed that no children crossed during those times.

Chair McLaughlin noted that there is no crossing guard at the intersection of Broadway and McGrath Highway and asked whether the City could work with the state to provide coverage at that location. Councilor Clingan added that the Otis Street overpass may eventually be removed, making it an appropriate time to pursue an additional crossing guard. Chair McLaughlin stated that he would follow up with Representative Connolly.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

21. Order
(ID # [25-1770](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That this City Council discuss the safety of the Summer Street bike lane design around or near Putnam Street to Benton Road and how and if additional safety modifications can be made.

Brad Rawson, Director of Transportation and Infrastructure, explained that the City continuously monitors street safety, roadway design, user feedback, and the overall user experience. He noted that the Summer Street redesign was developed between 2019 and 2021 and completed approximately one year ago as part of the Summer Street sewer reconstruction project. Director Rawson said the City revisited the location after a resident reported a bicycle crash. He explained that the narrow street and constrained design create challenges, including a raised bicycle facility with elevation changes between the roadway and sidewalk that can make it difficult for cyclists to exit the bike lane and turn left. In some cases, he noted that using the crosswalk at the next intersection may be the safest option. Director Rawson reported that vehicle speeds on Summer Street have decreased by approximately 40% and that staff have not observed traffic displacement onto neighboring streets.

Chair McLaughlin observed that several intersections along the corridor are challenging to navigate and noted that Benton Road has experienced additional traffic due to the Central Street bicycle lanes. He asked whether signage or flex posts could be installed to help users make turns more safely.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- PHPS - 2026-07-01 Cyclist Enforcement (with 26-0944)
- PHPS - 2026-07-01 Homelessness Memo (with 26-0106)
- PHPS - 2026-07-01 PSFA Findings Memo (with 26-0348)
- PHPS - 2026-07-01 ADA Coordinator Update (with 26-0825)
- PHPS - 2026-07-01 Menstrual Products Memo (with 26-0098, 26-0099, 26-0125)
- PHPS - 2026-07-01 WCAG Compliance Digital Accessibility Update (with 26-0838, 26-0824)
- PHPS - 2026-07-01 Evolving Web WCAG Summary Report May 2026 (with 26-0838, 26-0824)