



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Legislative Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:03 pm and adjourned at 7:01 pm with a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilor Scott, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Mbah, Councilor Burnley and Chair Davis), none opposed, and none absent.

Others present: Neha Singh – Mayor’s Office, Colin Zeigler – ISD, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr., City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen and Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0182](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Legislative Matters Committee Meeting of February 13, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**
AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and Ward Two City Councilor Scott
ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

2. Mayor's Communication (ID # [24-0145](#)) Conveying the 2023 Surveillance Technology Annual Report.

Councilor Ewen-Campen gave background on the necessity of the Surveillance Technology ordinance and reports. He said that the City Clerk’s Office offered to work on an online hub for access to all surveillance technology links and reports, but asked if the Administration had been working on it as well. Dir. Singh said that the Administration could coordinate with City Clerk on implementation. Councilor Ewen-Campen referenced written comment received from an organization called Digital Fourth, who raised questions over the location of GLX cameras, the disposition of incidental information that is collected through Grey Key, and whether there are plans to expand or modify the ShotSpotter program.

Councilor Ewen-Campen sponsored Emiliano Falcon-Morano of ACLU, who shared ACLU’s perspective on the report. He said that the answers

about costs and maintenance should be more detailed, citing DHS cameras as an example, and shared concerns about the use of ShotSpotter. Mr. Falcon-Morano said that ACLU is urging municipalities to drop ShotSpotter completely. Chair Davis had questions about shells found at sites and whether there is a system to audit ShotSpotter. He also said that some sections of the report did not address which legal standard was used to disclose information.

Councilor Burnley shared concerns about the public’s ability to file complaints about surveillance technology and reminded the committee that there must be an “easily accessible” place to submit complaints online. Councilor Mbah asked about Homeland Security cameras and how to audit them; Chair Davis referred to the impact report.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

3. Mayor's Request
 (ID # [24-0144](#))

Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Section 6-59 of the Code of Ordinances, to amend the definition of guidelines.

Environmental Health Manager Colin Zeigler explained that the amendment is to ensure that Biosafety Level 3 (BSL 3) labs meet safety standards. There are no existing or proposed BSL 3 facilities in Somerville yet. He said that applicants should meet both National Design and BMBL requirements when applying, but the end of the section now reads: “In the event that there is a conflict between the NIH Guidelines and the BMBL, the Committee shall require the more restrictive of the two.”

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

Referenced Documents:

- Leg Matters - 2024-02-27 Comments of Digital Fourth on Somerville Annual Surveillance Report (with 24-0145)