



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Legislative Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, July 1, 2025

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:03pm and adjourned at 7:05pm on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Strezo, Ewen-Campen, Scott and Davis), 0 opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Mbah).

Others present: Ellen Shachter - Director of Housing Stability, Morena Zelaya - Housing Policy Coordinator, Brendan Salisbury - Legislative Policy Analyst, Joseph Theall - Housing Counsel, Neha Singh - Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Cindy Amara - City Solicitor and Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

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

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0950](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Legislative Matters Committee Meeting of May 13, 2025.

RESULT:	<u>ACCEPTED</u>
AYE:	Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Strezo
ABSENT:	City Councilor At Large Mbah

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1044](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 7-64 and 7-65 of the Code of Ordinances to reduce displacement of tenants and update relocation payments.

The Condo Conversion Ordinance was introduced to address the issue of displacement when properties are sold. Morena Zelaya, Housing Policy Coordinator, reviewed the attachment titled Leg Matters July 1 Presentation. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked her to explain how the proposal would prevent tenants from being evicted before a condo conversion. Coordinator Zelaya responded that the ordinance would not directly stop evictions, but it would change the financial math by imposing a waiting period before a conversion permit could be issued. Director of Housing Stability, Ellen Shachter, added that if a property owner evicts a tenant, they must wait two years before converting the unit to a condominium. This delay shifts the financial incentives for developers and may encourage property owners to

keep units occupied. While the ordinance cannot prevent condominium sales, it can influence decisions made before the Condo Review Board by altering the economic calculations that often drive those decisions.

Councilor Strezo expressed appreciation for the Office of Housing Stability's efforts to prevent displacement and asked whether there had been any discussions about incentivizing new buyers to include affordable units or accept Section 8 tenants. Coordinator Zelaya explained that the Anti-Displacement Task Force did not explore expanding Section 8 stock as part of this ordinance. Joseph Theall, Housing Counsel, confirmed there were no legal issues with the proposed changes. Neha Singh, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, suggested keeping the item in committee to allow additional time for community feedback.

However, Councilor Scott and Chair Davis noted that the item had been filed 2.5 weeks ago and believed the proposal was straightforward and unlikely to generate much additional public input. Chair Davis reviewed the attachment titled 25-1044-CCO 2025 Proposed Changes and stated that only minimal changes were made. Councilor Ewen-Campen expressed strong support for the ordinance, saying it was something they had been working toward for many years. With an effective date planned for October, he said that as long as staff understand the ordinance is expected to pass, public feedback would not change his position. Councilor Scott, who participated in the working group, said he does not object to including an effective date if that's what staff believe is needed and emphasized that he does not want to delay the ordinance's passage. Brendan Salisbury, Legislative and Policy Analyst, explained that when only minor changes are made and no new sections are added, it can be difficult to include an effective date in an amendment. Chair Davis concluded by saying he would be open to considering the addition of an effective date at the next City Council meeting.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Strezo

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

3. Order
(ID # [24-1740](#))

By Councilor Scott, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Sait, Councilor Strezo, Councilor Davis and Councilor Clingan

That the Director of Housing assist this Council in drafting changes to the Condominium Conversion Ordinance to enable the Condominium Review Board to fulfill its intended function and prevent circumvention of tenant's rights.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

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4. Order
(ID # [25-0256](#))
- By Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the City Solicitor discuss with this Council whether elements of Boston's proposed Ordinance for Road Safety and Accountability for Delivery Providers could be used to disincentivize mopeds on the community path.
- Brendan Salisbury, Legislative and Policy Analyst, clarified that Boston's ordinance does not disincentivize the use of mopeds but does require them to carry insurance. In response to a question from Councilor Strezo, Analyst Salisbury confirmed that the ordinance was passed in Boston on April 2.
- City Attorney Cindy Amara noted that the path in question is owned by the MBTA, which limits what actions the City can take. However, she added that the City's lease for the path already prohibits motorized vehicles, and signage reflecting this restriction is currently in place. Chair Davis asked whether the signage could be updated to better clarify what constitutes a motorized vehicle. Attorney Amara responded that any changes to the signage would depend on the terms of the lease agreement with the MBTA. Councilor Strezo then asked whether the City could place a removable sandwich board to provide that clarification. Councilor Scott requested that Attorney Amara provide a legal citation defining motorized vehicles and also asked to review the lease.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
5. Public
Communication
(ID # [25-0077](#))
- Chris Dwan submitting comments re: Urban Forestry Committee recommendations.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
6. Order
(ID # [25-0154](#))
- By Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the Director of Economic Development present to this Council a plan to ensure compliance with Section 8-18 of the Code of Ordinances.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
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