



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Legislative Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

6:00 PM

Roll Call

Present: Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr., City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah and Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen

Absent: Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0253](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Legislative Matters Committee Meeting of February 27, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

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

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Scott

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0331](#))

Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 11-1, 11-3, 11-4, Article V, 11-121, 11-124, 11-125, 11-126, 11-176, 11-182, and 11-183 of the Code of Ordinances to reflect current department name, titles, and operations of the water and sewer department.

Chair Davis explained that most of the changes deal with correcting references resulting from splitting the Water and Sewer Department out from the Public Works Department. Liaison Carrillo informed the committee that the Administration is not yet ready to move forward with this item and will be submitting a new proposal in the fall.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0324](#))

Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 2-371, 11-125, and 11-164 the Code of Ordinances to reflect current operations of the water and sewer department, and provide time and flexibility for financial planning and development of rate forecast models.

Chair Davis stated that he has reviewed the changes with the Administration, noting that the bulk of changes address an enterprise account and some language refinements. Director Vidalis addressed the change of the dates for the required public hearing, saying that by doing so, the Water and Sewer (WS) Department would be able to have more accurate

forecasts of costs prior to setting the WS rates. He noted that some financial data, e.g., interest rates for borrowing, is not available until mid-May. He also mentioned that the department is taking up a greater share of the city’s debt service due to infrastructure upgrades. Director Vidalis said that the anticipation is that Council approval of the WS rates would be completed prior to the end of the fiscal year. He warned that if the dates were pushed out further, it could potentially affect the WS rates and the overall city budget. Liaison Carrillo informed the committee that the Water and Sewer Department’s budget review will be scheduled towards the end of the city’s FY-25 budget process.

Chair Davis expressed his desire to have the full Council weigh in on this matter and Liaison Carrillo stated that she and Director Vidalis met with Finance Committee Chair Wilson to make him aware of the proposal. Chair Davis asked Liaison Carrillo and Director Vidalis to be present at the April 11th City Council meeting to answer any questions.

Councilor Mbah asked for a clarification of section 11-125 and Chair Davis explained that WS is currently using a tiered rate and that this proposal aligns to the actual practice. As to subsidies, to the extent they exist, this proposal does not change anything.

Chair Davis motioned that the word “superintendent” be replaced by the word “director” throughout this ordinance proposal.

The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Ewen-Campen, Mbah, and Davis), none against and 2 absent (Councilors Scott and Burnley).

Chair Davis motioned that the words “Chapter 93” be changed to “Chapter 59” in Sec. 11-164, (a), (3).

The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Ewen-Campen, Mbah, and Davis), none against and 2 absent (Councilors Scott and Burnley).

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED AS AMENDED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Mbah and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

4. Ordinance
(ID # [23-1461](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr.
Amending Section 12-116 of the Code of Ordinances to create a Safe Streets ordinance, to expedite protected bike lanes.

Chair Davis said a proposed amendment in committee is attached but will not be used as there is a new proposal based on best practices. Policy

Analyst Salisbury gave a summary and said that the process is ongoing and that Councilor Burnley has been involved in the discussions. The new proposal was emailed to committee members during this meeting.

Director Rawson commented that the city has made progress in creating safe streets and is continuing its outreach. He noted that the City Council has been a partner in working on a series of traffic policy plans, adding that in 2023, the dialogue began with multiple departments in the city. That dialogue, he said, has gone as far as it can and this item may be considered as the high level kick off.

Mr. Schreiber said the ordinance is presented as an update to the Complete Streets Ordinance and deals with designing streets for various modes, protected bike lanes, and providing yearly reports to the City Council. Director Rawson explained that the Somerville ordinance is more multi-modal than the one used by Cambridge. Mr. Schreiber noted that in the section on pedestrian transit improvements, there are 12 different related actions. Additionally, there is a section on ADA compliance actions. He also noted that the Priority Network must be done by the end of 2030. Director Postlewaite explained that the ADA Transition Plan, (which is being updated), is being rolled into the document to put it on a level footing with other goals and also serves to further codify the plans. Councilor Ewen-Campen inquired about plans for a community process and Director Rawson explained that several sections will function as placeholders for policy plans and/or policy tools, with some elements coming after the plan is developed. Mr. Schreiber pointed out that the city must also put out a public facing website. Director Rawson commented that every intersection is different and relevant data will be evaluated when designs are created.

Councilor Burnley said that the language presented here reflects the research that was performed, but there are still some questions that need to be answered. There's also the effort of trying to bridge the gap between what the city is capable of and what its goals are. He went on to say that some areas need to have language refined and some ambiguities need to be addressed. Additionally, definitions of improvements should be reflective of state regulations and written so that triggers are avoided in certain circumstances so that a minor project does not become a major one.

Councilor Burnley moved *to replace the older version of the ordinance with the one presented and distributed at this meeting.*

The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Burnley and Davis), none against and 1 absent (Councilor Scott).

City Solicitor Amara told the committee that the proposed ordinance has not yet been submitted to the Law Department for review so she doesn't know how long a review would take. She suggested putting the item off until May

to allow time to address any outstanding issues.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- Legislative Matters 2024-04-02 Safe Streets Updated Draft (with 23-1461)