



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Housing and Community Development Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 30, 2023

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Strezo at 6:00 p.m. and adjourned at 6:52 p.m. on a Roll Call Vote: 2 in favor (Councilors Strezo, Clingan), 0 opposed, 1 absent (Councilor Pineda Neufeld).

Others present:

Michael Potere – Assistant Clerk of Committees; Anne Tate – Somerville Resident; Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison; Susan Yerkes – Director, Parks and Recreation.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Kristen Strezo and Jesse Clingan

Absent: Vice Chair Judy Pineda Neufeld

Committee
Minutes
(ID # [23-0658](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Housing and Community Development Meeting of April 19, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Strezo and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Vice Chair Pineda Neufeld

Order
(ID # [22-1408](#))

By Councilor Strezo, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Ewen-Campen That the Housing and Community Development Committee discuss the Democracy Collaborative’s report on Advancing Community Wealth Building in the City of Somerville.

Anne Tate summarized the report, attached to the Item as “Community-Wealth-Building-in-Somerville-final.pdf,” which outlines five “pillars” that could be leveraged to advancing community wealth in Somerville: (1) childcare worker cooperative, (2) anchor institutions, (3) a robust workforce ecosystem, (4) local investment, and (5) housing affordability.

Councilor Clingan expressed support for the item, and added that improving childcare resources would be a good way to start in this process.

Tate added that the organization was communicating with the Somerville Education Foundation to explore if they could expand their mission and possibly facilitate other community initiatives and be a central entity for the distribution of community assets throughout the city, thereby adding infrastructure and capacity to the process. Councilor Clingan mentioned that

the city currently has a Jobs Trust and Retention Fund that currently assists residents in employment matters, and that this idea could work in conjunction with that.

Chair Strezo asked about the interviews conducted with potential “anchor” businesses, including Tufts University and Mass General Hospital, and Tate replied that Tufts University in particular expressed a need for finding local people for various jobs, and added that Tufts is eager to form a relationship with the city to improve their ability to hire labor locally.

Chair Strezo asked for further detail about cooperative laundry services, and Tate replied that typically large corporations provide much of the laundry services to business and organizations who outsource that work, but that there is an example in Cleveland, Ohio, where a laundry cooperative was successfully established to keep the money generated from those services within the community.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Order
(ID # [23-0483](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Parks and Recreation explain the wait list process for enrollment in Parks and Recreation programs.

Director Yerkes explained that the enrollment takes place online through a service called “MyRec.” Residents register for programs on that website, and when a program reaches its capacity, a “waitlist” is generated by the website on a first-come, first-served basis. That waitlist is subsequently broken down by the type of program and age group, where applicable. Director Yerkes added that the waitlist system is entirely conducted by MyRec, and is based on the order in which residents apply for the programs.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Order
(ID # [23-0482](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Kelly, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson

That the Director of Parks and Recreation consider opening the Ginny Smithers Pool on Sundays to expand swim lesson opportunities, including consideration of engaging an outside vendor or organization to provide the swim lessons.

Director Yerkes stated that the primary limitation in expanding the hours of the city’s pools is the difficulty in hiring lifeguards, and noted that the problem was not just in Somerville, but in neighboring cities as well. Chair Strezo asked if there was acute competition among Somerville and those neighboring communities, such as Cambridge and Boston, and Director Yerkes replied that the city’s Human Resources Department has been

working to make sure that Somerville's pay scale is competitive with other municipalities. Director Yerkes added that the department is also working to recruit lifeguards from Somerville High School, noting that several new lifeguards were just added based on those efforts. Chair Strezo expressed appreciation for the department's efforts.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Order
(ID # [23-0546](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Economic Development update this City Council regarding the strategy and projected timeline for a Community Center in Union Square, including plans for a feasibility study.

Legislative Liaison Carrillo indicated that the administration did not have a representative present to speak on this item. However, Legislative Liaison Carrillo reaffirmed the administration's commitment to community spaces, noting that this item is reflected in its Capital Investment Plan. Legislative Liaison Carrillo also noted that the Somerville Homeless Coalition's Engagement Center is up and running, and that the administration has also received feedback from community members requesting a space for teenagers.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Order
(ID # [22-1826](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson

That the Director of Economic Development update this Council on progress toward a Task Force for creation of a Community Center.

Legislative Liaison Carrillo indicated that the administration did not have a concrete update regarding this item, but that work was being done in this area and that an update would be provided to the City Council when available. Councilor Clingan noted that the creation of a Community Center remains a priority for the City Council and expressed a desire for the administration to continue prioritizing efforts to create one. Chair Strezo expressed appreciation for the administration's responsiveness regarding this item, and added that evaluating the feasibility of a community space for teenagers is an excellent example of the same.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED