



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, December 1, 2022

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Pineda Neufeld at 6:02 pm and adjourned at 9:26 pm. Councilor Wilson moved to adjourn, and the motion was approved by roll call vote.

A recess was taken at 8:10 and a roll call vote was taken at 8:13 to re-establish quorum.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo - Mayor's Office, James Zamer, Katie Gallant - Somerville Housing Authority, Luc Schuster, Sarah Lewis - OSPCD, Michael McNeley, Zac Zaremba, Anne Gill - Personnel, Jason Piques - Law Office, Christopher Ward - SPD, Matthew McCune, Stephanie Widzowski - Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Judy Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Kristen Strezo, Charlotte Kelly, Jesse Clingan and Jake Wilson

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [22-1901](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 2, 2022.

RESULT: APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Strezo, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-1904](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of James Zamer to the Housing Authority Board of Commissioners.

Councilor Wilson asked if this is an appointment for an "at-large" position on the board, to which the answer was yes. Councilor Wilson asked the candidate to describe what he brings to the role. Councilor Kelly asked what Mr. Zamer thought his role on the board is to keep vulnerable residents in their homes, and Mr. Zamer spoke to his personal experience with housing and described how he would be a resource to residents. Councilor Strezo asked if the candidate will intend to stay in Somerville and whether he could continue his work on the Board of Commissioners whether or not he lives in affordable housing. Councilor Clingan spoke to the impact on the Mystic community of the loss of Stephenson Aman, and stressed the importance of being available for residents.

Chair Pineda Neufeld moved to recommend approval.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Strezo, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-1878](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Luc Schuster to the Planning Board.

Mr. Schuster introduced himself and his work leading a public interest think tank. Councilor Wilson asked the candidate what developers owe the city. Mr. Schuster said that he wants to be able to embrace new development when it is paired with a real commitment to leveraging new growth to make equity-enhancing investments. There was a conversation about affordable housing and high-density mixed-use transit-oriented development. Councilor Kelly then asked about the responsibility of the Planning Board to promote development while mitigating displacement, which built on the candidate's earlier answer. Mr. Schuster emphasized the role of state and federal in addressing housing issues. Councilor Kelly also asked about the role of the Planning Board with respect to neighborhood councils. Councilor Strezo asked how the candidate would ensure there are enough 3-bedroom and 4-bedroom units for families in Somerville. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked about the candidate's goals and accomplishments for the Planning Board.

Chair Pineda Neufeld moved to recommend approval.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Strezo, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-1876](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Michael McNeley to the Planning Board.

Councilor Wilson asked the candidate his thoughts on how the "15-Minute City" concept applies to Somerville, and what developers owe to the city. Mr. McNeley said his approach is making value for everyone and that development does not have to be "a zero-sum game" if the right rules are in place. There was also a conversation about affordable housing and high-density mixed-use transit-oriented development. Councilor Kelly asked the responsibility of the Planning Board to promote development while mitigating displacement, and how the board will make sure that all Somerville residents benefit from development. She also asked about the relationship between the Planning Board and neighborhood councils. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked about the candidate's goals and accomplishments for the Planning Board.

Chair Pineda Neufeld moved to recommend approval.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: Vice Chair Strezo

5. Mayor's Request
(ID # [22-1718](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Zac Zaremba to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Councilor Clingan commented on the candidate's real estate and banking background and asked if he would be able to call out a developer that refuses to cooperate with Somerville objectives. Mr. Zaremba answered yes, that he is more interested in developing a community and environment that serves residents than catering to developer's desires, and spoke to previous work in which he created desirable outcomes for both groups. Mr. Zaremba explained why he does not expect to have conflicts of interest with his work, but that he would recuse himself if necessary. Councilor Strezo commented that she does not feel comfortable supporting the candidate at this time because of his experience in banking and his recent relocation to Somerville. Mr. Zaremba said that he has a commitment to staying in the city long-term, and explained that his current banking work does not directly relate to development.

Councilor Kelly asked how the candidate will work so that decisions made by the ZBA are accessible to residents. She also asked how the candidate will balance experiences and professional relationships with concerns of residents. Councilor Wilson asked to what extent the ZBA should take neighborhood resident opinions into account when making decisions.

Chair Pineda Neufeld moved to recommend approval.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: Vice Chair Strezo

6. Mayor's Request
(ID # [22-2007](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Matthew McCune to the position of Police Officer.

Liaison Carrillo provided the following information in advance of this meeting:

- The vacancy Mr. McCune is seeking to fill was caused by Timothy Van Nostrand's promotion to the position of Sergeant on 8/26/22.

The three remaining vacancies were caused by a promotion to the rank of Sergeant on 10/14/22, a retirement on 10/28/22, and another retirement effective 11/30/22.

- Status update on the officers who were approved (April 2022 and June 2022) and sent to the police academy: 5 are active patrol officers and 2 started the academy on August 1st.

Councilor Kelly asked about the role of trauma-informed care and approaches to policing, and what the phrase “Black Lives Matter” means to him. Mr. McCune explained his understanding of trauma-informed care and Black Lives Matter, and said that both are important to him. Councilor Kelly asked what the candidate would do if witnessing a non-SPD officer using excessive force against people demonstrating their First Amendment rights. Mr. McCune replied that he would step in immediately and then report that individual to the on-scene superior.

Councilor Wilson asked if any other candidates were bypassed in Mr. McCune’s appointment, to which Liaison Carrillo said that she would find the answer for the committee later. Councilor Wilson commented on the societal structure that leads to a large social work component in policing positions, and asked the candidate’s thoughts. Mr. McCune said that his experience in teaching prepared him well to help with a variety of needs. Councilor Wilson asked if the candidate would commit to taking de-escalation or Crisis Intervention trainings, to which Mr. McCune said yes. Councilor Wilson asked what the responsibility is of an officer to report misconduct of another officer or a superior. Mr. McCune spoke to the importance of community trust and said that officers have an absolute responsibility to report misconduct.

Councilor Clingan asked how the candidate’s personal experience with policing has informed his attitude toward policing. Mr. McCune spoke to his uncle’s work ethic and impact as an officer and how that influenced his mindset.

Chair Pineda Neufeld moved to recommend approval.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Strezo, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

7. Order
(ID # [22-0510](#))

By Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Human Resources update this Council on family leave benefits available to City of Somerville employees.

Taken together with item 22-1446. Dir. Gill gave a presentation on benefit

review. Councilor Kelly asked for the current range of allotted paid family and medical leave for union municipal employees. She also asked if employees have decided not to take leave due to a lack of pay and whether employees in exit interviews have mentioned paid leave as a reason for leaving, to which the answer was no. Councilor Kelly asked if there is a bank for sick time if non-union employees have used their annual allotment. Dir. Gill said that their work-from-home policy has become more flexible since the pandemic started, and that has allowed employees to save sick leave.

Councilor Wilson said he would like to find solutions for covering for new employees that have unforeseen problems and have no leave accumulated. He also asked if Somerville offers supplemental insurance during unpaid leave, to which Dir. Gill said yes, but the premium is covered by the employee. Councilor Wilson said that he would like to find a way for the city to cover that premium.

Councilor Clingan asked why the city would not opt into FMLA. Dir. Gill answered that opting in would require all the unions and the entire city to agree. Councilor Clingan commented that it seemed like the city would lose current benefits by switching systems.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked if there are any updates on the timeline of the compensation study. Dir. Gill said that they are likely to have new data by February.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Order
(ID # [22-1446](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Wilson, Councilor Kelly and Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Director of Human Resources provide a preliminary report on staff feedback regarding the Commonwealth's Paid Family and Medical Leave policy.

Taken together with item 22-0510.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

9. Order
(ID # [22-0570](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly, Councilor Wilson and Councilor Clingan

That the Administration report on how it is staffing and executing sections 9-37 through 9-41 of the Wage Theft Ordinance, relative to enforcement.

Liaison Carrillo said that the Administration has had conversations with Councilor Gomez Mouakad and a liaison to the WTAC and made some

steps, including adding contract language regarding procurement that affirms the signer is not participating in wage theft. ISD is also close to being fully staffed, and once they are at capacity they will begin implementing affidavits for all developers seeking permits. These affidavits will also affirm that developers have not engaged in wage theft activity. Councilor Wilson asked if there are plans for enforcement in instances where wage theft has been committed. Ms. Carrillo replied that enforcement is the responsibility of the Attorney General's office and described the resources that they provide.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

10. Order
(ID # [22-1597](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Kelly
That the Director of Racial and Social Justice present an update to this Council on efforts to hire an Executive Director for the Human Rights Commission.

Liaison Carrillo said that Dir. Capers has indicated not only to the HRC but also to the Commission for Women and the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities that a strategic plan must come before hiring an Executive Director. RSJ has not received any strategic plans yet, but Dir. Capers is working on a summary of ongoing work from the year. Councilor Kelly asked if the allocation for a consultant in the FY23 budget was for all of these commissions or just for the Commission for Women. She also asked if any of those funds have been spent or whether an RFP has been put together for the consultants. Ms. Carrillo said that she would follow up on those questions.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

11. Order
(ID # [22-1844](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Racial and Social Justice provide an update on the Police Staffing Report.

Liaison Carrillo said that RSJ had provided the consultant with the last piece of data needed for analysis, and they are now waiting for the results of analysis. The Administration is hoping to have that work finished by winter of 2023, which will generate a final report to guide the community engagement process. Councilor Kelly commented that the Administration said at the beginning of 2022 that the staffing study would be done in May and it has been pushed back multiple times, and asked what is the ongoing cause of delay. Ms. Carrillo said that she would get an answer.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

-
12. Order (ID # [22-0209](#)) By Councilor Pineda Neufeld
That the Committee on Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters discuss and revise the process for reviewing appointments and re-appointments.

Councilor Kelly commented that this item can be marked Work Complete because the charter review process helps the Council have some of these conversations. Otherwise, it could be addressed in another item.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Note: The Committee may meet in Executive Session to review protected personnel information or to discuss matters related to individual candidates pursuant to MGL c30A s21(a)(1).

Referenced Documents:

- 1) C of APM - 2022-12-1 Requested SPD Documents
- 2) C of APM - 2022-12-1 City of Somerville Benefit Review (with 22-0510, 22-1446)