



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 6, 2019

REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	Vice Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Councilor Will Mbah, Councilor Mark Niedergang, George Proakis - OSPCD, Brad Rawson - OSPCD, Hannah Carrillo- OSPCD, Ellen Schachter - OSPCD, Tom Galligani - OSPCD, Ben Sommer - OSPCD, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Kim Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:04 PM by Chairman Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 8:17 PM.

Approval of the November 26, 2018 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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207159: That the Administration explain why the Healey Schoolyard redevelopment plan was dropped from the Capital Projects plan list.

Mr. Rawson confirmed that the Healey remains a top priority, and the project is on the City's capital plan. It doesn't have the same specificity as some of the other, larger projects, but they are working on bringing a design funding request to the Council.

Councilor Clingan asked about why it was previously scheduled and Mr. Rawson replied that it, along with several other projects, had to be adjusted with changes to Green Line Funding. Councilor Clingan asked when it could be expected to be scheduled and Mr. Rawson answered that a multi-year schedule for this specific projects is being created. He confirmed that the project has not been dropped, but rather has been shifted.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207160: That the Administration prioritize the redevelopment of the Healey Schoolyard Tot Lot as soon as the 2019 school year.

Chair Ewen-Campen asked Mr. Rawson to detail the phases of the project and Mr. Rawson noted that the DPW has been out to fix the slide and stabilize swings. Phase Zero includes similar types of work, but we need to get outside vendors to complete additional work such as ladders and railings. The goal is that it will be fully operational for the start of the 2019 fall school year.

Councilor Clingan asked for thoughts on the feasibility of disconnecting the Tot Lot from the remainder of the project. Mr. Rawson noted that there should be a cost-benefit analysis to determine what steps should be taken.

Chair Ewen-Campen clarified that Phase Zero is bringing existing grounds up to code, with potential improvements. There will be a further decision about whether the improvements will be considered sufficient or whether further steps will be taken. Councilor Clingan requested a flow chart of the phases and Mr. Rawson replied that it is being created and will be shared at a future meeting.

Phase One includes non-hill slope and non-field elements of the school yard; those closest to the building. This can have a relatively quick construction mobilization (July-Sept), which worked at both the Argenziano and Winter Hill schools and is a fiscally responsible approach. The goal would be for bids from a general contractor. Phase Two includes slope and field work. Some of the earth work will be very expensive, but we will try to ensure that Phases Zero and One are not held hostage while this work is being planned. Councilor Hirsch requested additional information about the hill slope, and Mr. Rawson replied that more technical information is needed before determining Phase Two.

Councilor Clingan asked whether severing the Tot Lot could be executed ASAP without holding up other phases. Mr. Rawson answered that an RFP is being prepared for all elements. A potential recommendation is to update the Tot Lot elements, but not add anything new. Councilor Clingan asked how quickly we can get a new design into Phase One. Mr. Rawson added that it should be ready to proceed to construction bids by June.

Jake Wilson, Healey parent, asked whether there was money in the Healey budget to pay for the Tot Lot and asked if that piece could be put out to bid sooner, to be completed over the summer. Mr. Rawson will communicate that to the Superintendent's office and determine whether it is feasible.

Another parent asked if the Healey community can provide any additional information about what teachers, students, and parents are looking for. Councilor Clingan responded that comments can be sent to Arn Franzen, but unfortunately we just have to keep pushing the process forward. Chair Ewen-Campen also recommended that the School Committee representative be contacted and involved.

Ben Kaufman, Healey parent, asked about what the \$80,000 available for design work could be used for. Mr. Rawson answered that it is not sufficient to design a facility, so supplemental funding is necessary. It might be enough for Phase Zero plus Phase One, but this would leave out a major long-term need. Another community member asked about the potential for a crosswalk on Meacham St, and Mr. Rawson replied that he will look into that.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207164: That the Director of SPCD work with the Housing Authority to enable wheelchair access from the Mystic View apartments to the Healey School.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206820: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on the Healy schoolyard redesign and consider making it a top priority.

Phasing documents, more clarity around funding, and more information about the Tot Lot are requested from the administration for the next meeting.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

207173: That the Administration provide to this Board by its January 10, 2019 meeting a response to the attached petition of Foss Park stakeholders, which requests a schematic community design process and a plan for financing and managing the facility.

Mr. Rawson let the Committee know that these items are being worked on. The plan is to present a series of options, but they are not at that point yet. Councilor Hirsch noted that the window for having any control over the state's plans is shrinking, as they plan to complete the work by the end of the summer.

Mr. Rawson responded that the next step is to confirm the status with the DCR.

Chair Ewen-Campen asked how much funding would be expected from Somerville as a result of these updates. Mr. Rawson is uncertain of a funding number, but noted that if City resources are sought, then more City benefit will be expected.

Councilor Hirsch commented that spending City funds on schematic design would be worthwhile, as it is one of the largest open spaces. Chair Ewen-Campen inquired about whether this was even possible and Mr. Rawson noted that we passed a home-rule petition 10 years ago that we can spend City funds on state-owned land, but it could not be a unilateral decision and would require a partnership agreement.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

207457: Conveying the Community Land Trust Working Group Recommendations Report.

Ms. Carillo shared that the working group has met 12 times since May, through which a mission statement, draft bylaws, and a recommendations report have been created. The primary recommendations are: that the City assist with incorporation and support that process; that technical assistance be provided by the City; that the group can leverage City resources to better engage the community; and that the City provide a preference for community-based organizations like CLTs in the RFP process.

Ms. Carillo shared that a CLT is a nonprofit organization that acquires property, holds the land in perpetuity, and re-sells the structures on the land at affordable rates. It is a flexible model, that can evolve significantly to be what the community needs it to be. Chair Ewen-Campen also noted that a CLT is defined by its governance structure of: 1/3 members of the CLT; 1/3 policy/nonprofit experts; and 1/3 residents at large.

Ms. Shachter noted that none of the other models for CLTs are necessarily a road map for Somerville, which is why technical assistance is such an important piece to moving forward.

Councilor Hirsch asked how many deed restricted units we need in order to meet our affordability goals. As such, could other pieces of affordability be part of the CLT? Chair Ewen-Campen noted that any of those are on the table, but are not the first step. There is a challenge to getting the community involved because the entity doesn't exist yet, but the more involvement the better.

Councilor Niedergang asked if there was an effort to encourage people to donate their homes to the City in their estates. Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that it would be great to build a reputation that would lend itself to community building in that way.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207157: That the Director of SPCD report on the GLX station design process for the 7 new stations, including the timeline and opportunities for public input.

Mr. Rawson provided station design plans. They can also be found at <https://www.mass.gov/green-line-extension-project-glx>. Chair Ewen-Campen noted that despite the elements that we cannot control, it is important to note anything that can be done to mitigate future problems.

Mr. Rawson shared that the MBTA had a community meeting last week. The design-build contract methodology was updated to ensure that the project could be sufficiently funded to move forward. They are roughly 60% through the design process in total, but not all elements are moving at the same pace. They will continue to work to avoid precluding future additions, in particular paths of travel.

Chair Ewen-Campen asked who should be contacted with questions and concerns related to this project and Mr. Rawson replied that there are 7 Somerville residents volunteering on a working group and communicating with other residents. This list is available on the City's GLX website. Additionally, transportation@somervillema.gov is also available for questions.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206496: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on the plan in the "Equity Talent Playbook for Somerville".

Mr. Galligani and Mr. Sommer shared that workforce development is not something that cities usually play a role in, but rather is addressed through regional workforce investment boards, which can lead to service gaps. This plan won't replace anything happening regionally, but will allow Somerville to supplement current activity and play a niche role.

Mr. Sommer shared a presentation detailing the labor and wage gaps and community priorities: residents with high barriers to employment; finding ways to build capacity; making connections to jobs that provide benefits; providing experiential training opportunities. The Talent Equity Playbook contains 4 key strategies: build a coordinated system of education and training services; position Somerville as a national leader in employment engagement practices; build a suite of experiential learning opportunities for Somerville residents; develop resiliency responses to the future of work.

Chair Ewen-Campen asked how we'll know if this is working. Mr. Sommer answered that various measures will be tracked, including whether someone has gotten a job or developed new skills. Chair Ewen-Campen asked if there is a plan for regular reporting and Mr. Sommer plans to create an annual report. Mr. Galligani added that as they build digital infrastructure to better communicate with other agencies, they will be able to better understand what data are available and useful.

Councilor Hirsch noted that we already have a good relationship with parents of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, and that could be a starting place for assessments and communication to connect those individuals to jobs, education etc.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

207369: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board on possible incentives the City could offer to so-called "High Road" businesses.

Chair Ewen-Campen reported that he consistently hears that businesses find that navigating the City's departments is challenging, and a liaison position could be an important role. Mr. Galligani replied that there are several people within OSPCD who field inquiries and connect with businesses, and perhaps they are not promoting themselves well enough. They also work closely with SomerViva staff to communicate with business owners. Councilor Hirsch asked if 311 could be the resource for this, so it could be truly one call to resolve issues. Cross-departmental software could assist with this also.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

207171: That the City Solicitor inform this Board in writing of its options for prohibiting the use of Non-Disclosure Agreements between the City and prospective developers or commercial tenants.

Chair Ewen-Campen asked Mr. Proakis to elaborate on which instances NDAs are allowed. Mr. Proakis responded that they are never suggested by the City, and the goal is never to hold back information. Specific exemptions in both the NDA and the Public Records Law must be met in order to withhold documents. There may, however, be some companies that are unwilling to speak with City staff until they are confident that it will not be shared that they are exploring Somerville, particularly with their own employees, investors and the community they are leaving. To the extent that we need it as a tool, we may agree to an NDA to begin a conversation with a business. The moment the engagement is over, the documents will be made public.

Chair Ewen-Campen asked if there are examples of success stories of NDAs. Mr. Galligani replied that the only instance he is aware of where one was used was with Amazon, though it is important to maintain discretion and trust within Economic Development. Chair Ewen-Campen noted a concern about public trust. Mr. Proakis noted that all of the information will eventually become public. There is also a limit to what could be extended in an agreement that the Council would not have to approve at some point anyway, so there would still be a public process, it would simply be delayed for a period of time.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

207057: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Communications inform this Board of efforts to promote municipal broadband in regard to current construction and renovation of the city's infrastructure.

Ms. Connor shared that there is an Internet Access Task Force that is planning to release a report with recommendations by May.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

206819: That the appropriate department adjust the hours of the dog parks from 8:00 am to 7:00 am.

Chair Ewen-Campen shared that the dog parks legally don't open until 8am, which is impractical. It makes sense to shift the hours, and then enforce them, in a way that could be the most fair to both the dog owners and the dog park abutters. Councilor Clingan added that people are using the dog parks earlier anyway, and now they are breaking the rules. 7am would be a reasonable time to allow use of dog parks.

Ms. Connor shared that building awareness and trying to find creative solutions for enforcement should be explored.

Councilor Hirsch added that it might pose another issue to only change the hours for dogs, but not children or people. She would be in favor of changing all park hours to 7am. Councilor Clingan asked if the hours might be park-specific based on locations and abutters.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204995: That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Arts Council Director determine the feasibility of creating a mural (or another graffiti deterrent) on the back side of the Argenziano School.

Councilor Hirsch shared that the wall has graffiti regularly, and is visible to children coming to school. There was previous discussion of planting vines to cover the wall, but another option would be to cover the wall by creating a mural.

Ms. Connor spoke with the DPW Commissioner and Mr. Jenkins, who is exploring options. The location is in a right-of-way and poses challenges for staff to address. Councilor Hirsch added that there is often a 6 month delay, during which the graffiti remains visible.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207277: That the Commissioner of Public Works remove graffiti from the back of the Argenziano School and consider ways to reduce future graffiti, such as bushes or a mural.

See 207277

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202149: That the Administration discuss requiring adding the word "Somerville" to buildings in the Assembly Square area, to enhance office and commercial marketing efforts.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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202715: That the Director of SPCD share with this Board a marketing plan for commercial development, highlighting the transformative districts.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206615: DPW Commissioner responding to various Board Orders submitted at the 6/14/18 meeting.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206616: DPW Commissioner responding to various Board Orders submitted at the 6/28/18 meeting.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205272: That the Administration update this Board with the parking situation at the high school.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204984: That the Director of SPCD provide data for all current affordable housing stock in the city, including section 8 vouchers, state and federal affordable housing, and inclusionary housing.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205097: That this Board's Committee on Housing and Community Development discuss a 'Housing Hackathon'.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204975: That the City Solicitor provide an opinion on whether this Board can require landlords to distribute voter registration forms to all new tenants.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205389: Assistant City Solicitor responding to #204975 re: requiring landlords to distribute voter registration forms to all new tenants.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Handouts:

- GLX Info (with 207157)
- Talent Equity Playbook (with 206496)