



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 11, 2020

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

| Attendee Name | Title | Status | Arrived |
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| Lance L. Davis | Chair | Present | |
| Jesse Clingan | Vice Chair | Present | |
| Matthew McLaughlin | Ward One City Councilor | Absent | |

The meeting was held in the Sub-Committee Room and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:03pm and adjourned at 8:11pm.

Councilor McLaughlin was unable to attend due to a funeral service but shared some feedback with the Chair in advance.

Others present: Khushbu Webber - Mayor's Office; Doug Kress - HHS; Denise Taylor - Communications & Community Engagement; Hannah Pappenheim - Law; Holly Simione; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees

Snow Removal

209474: That the Administration consider undertaking a targeted mailing to prior-year violators of snow shoveling requirements.

A more comprehensive mailing was deemed a priority idea; see 209540.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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209539: That the City Solicitor inform this Council of the minimum condition that would allow the Supervisor of Inspectional Services or the Commissioner of Public Works to clear a sidewalk that is in violation of the snow shoveling ordinance, and charge or lien the property owner for the cost.

Ms. Pappenheim shared the opinion of Assistant City Solicitor Shapiro that the ordinance is clear that any violation of the ordinance allows for the DPW (specifically the Superintendent of Highways) to clear the sidewalk at the expense of the property owner. There was no general sense of how often, if ever, this was utilized. Chair Davis shared that the City is limited in the fines that can be charged and this could make the impact more significant. Councilor Clingan wondered if the department would have the capacity to execute this and if it would be a substantial change in duties. Ms. Pappenheim noted that there is a snow-clearing crew but she is uncertain if this would be a significantly different job description. Councilor Clingan added that an incentive may be useful. Chair Davis clarified that members of the public who are aware of egregious situations should continue to make the request through 311. Ms. Webber will also connect with the ISD Director to determine if there is a level of warning or attempted cooperation that

should be conducted before this action is taken, even if not required by ordinance, and determine a point of contact for this type of issue.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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209540: That the Director of Communications discuss with this Council the possibility of a mailing or a flyer to all property owners, and/or all residents, every year or two, informing them of their responsibilities under the snow shoveling ordinance.

Ms. Taylor expressed that this is an important ordinance to reinforce, which is done through a number of different means, but this is a great idea that could be very effective. An estimated price would be \$15,000 for one language but more for additional language versions. She would be happy to add this cost to her budget request for the next fiscal year. Chair Davis asked Ms. Taylor if she has a sense for how effective mailings of this nature are and Ms. Taylor noted that it is the type of thing that is effective in print, particularly to the extent that a visual such as what a properly cleared sidewalk should look like, is helpful. Safety on our walkways is an increasingly important issue as we address mobility in the city. A mailing to everyone would capture the previous year's violators and would likely be more effective than targeting the violators with a targeted letter. An image of a ticket could be used within a broader mailing. Chair Davis asked what other mailings of this nature are conducted. Ms. Taylor noted that there are not many items that are sent annually due to cost and waste but an annual mailing would be useful, given the resident turnover. This could be reevaluated if the violation rate drops considerably. Ms. Taylor added that using mailing lists of actual resident addresses and sending first-class mail, rather than bulk mail, has proven the most effective for delivery.

Councilor Clingan wondered if there is a way to convey that snow removal is the responsibility of the property owner, rather than the tenant. Chair Davis noted that many leases have provisions for the tenants to remove snow, and sometimes the landlords also shift the fines to tenants as well. One of the advantages of sending the mailing to everyone, rather than just property owners, is that tenants should be aware of the rules in order to report issues to ISD if needed. Ms. Taylor suggested as well that safety information, both for protecting pedestrians and those with mobility issues, and shoveling safety, could be included.

Councilor Clingan asked how the information on the odd/even parking is disseminated. The Communications department creates the fliers and they are distributed by the Parking Control Officers to vehicles in targeted areas. There are also signs on the streets, and information on the website and social media, as well as on the City cable station.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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207879: That the Director of Inspectional Services consider making dumping snow on vacant lots a punishable offense.

Ms. Webber will provide a written response when she has more information.

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| RESULT: | PLACED ON FILE |
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Safe Injection Site Update

208691: That members of the recently established Safe Injection Site Task Force appear before this Council's Committee on Public Health and Public Safety to discuss their findings in a public forum.

Mr. Kress shared that there is a Supervised Consumption Facility Task Force that is meeting monthly and is still in the process of data collection. Their recommendation will be provided to the Council when it is complete. This is in partnership with SIFMA, and they are expecting some recommendations in a few months. There are a number of legal issues that need to be considered, including federal and state laws and local ordinances. There is a bill at the State House considering possibilities at that level, and both the Mayor and Mr. Kress have presented and met with state officials on this topic. A second consideration is the site itself, including where it is located, what services are provided, and how to make it feel safe for the surrounding communities. The Department has been hosting guided discussions through neighborhood house parties to address concerns. They have also met with potential clients to conduct outreach about the needs to ensure that those are met in a way that will ensure the facility is used. Mr. Kress added that the larger population of users is in the region, but not specific to Somerville, so a third focus is communications, with the goal of establishing the City as leader and a resource. This is a harm reduction methodology and treatment is the ultimate goal.

Mr. Kress added that they have been looking toward the sites that exist in Canada and noted that they have experienced no fatal overdoses. They are also working with researchers to understand the model options and determine what is best for Somerville. Chair Davis asked for data from communities who have tried this, and evidence of what worked and what didn't. There are no supervised injection facilities open in the country thus far. There is some law being addressed in Philadelphia.

Councilor Clingan wondered if Somerville is the right location for this, and if it can save a life, it is important work. Mr. Kress noted that the City is small enough to move the needle but large enough to be a model that could scale for replication elsewhere. Councilor Clingan also asked how this connects to the City's goal of prevention. Mr. Kress clarified that prevention is targeted toward those who have not started using and encouraging them not to. However, addiction is a disease, and reducing harm is another important consideration.

Chair Davis shared Councilor McLaughlin's question about how Mr. Kress is comfortable taking the lead on matters such as this and the city's rollout of adult use cannabis, while also supervising organizations that have stated opposition to aspects of those issues. Mr. Kress noted that there is a spectrum for this disease, and various targets along that continuum are important to consider and address. Mr. Kress also clarified that marijuana is a legally permitted substance for adults, and the work on prevention falls on the same spectrum as preventing alcohol abuse. Councilor Clingan noted that there is a line of thinking that this normalizes drug use and shared a concern regarding that message. Mr. Kress agreed that this brings a stigma to the disease; the goal is to bring a harm reduction tool to those who suffer from this disease. Councilor McLaughlin also asked for the number of Somerville residents who overdosed on opioids and marijuana last year. There is more information in the Opioid Overdose Report; see discussion of Item 209321. He stated that the number for marijuana is not collected. Chair Davis asked Mr. Kress whether, to the best of his knowledge, it not possible to overdose on marijuana and Mr. Kress stated that it is not medically possible to the best of his knowledge..

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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208692: That the Director of Health and Human Services provide the City Council with a copy of the Safe Injection Site Task Force recommendations.

See 208691

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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208693: That the Director of SomerStat provide this Council with a citywide heat map of areas where overdoses and improperly disposed needles are reported to identify a location

for a safe injection facility.

See 209241

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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209241: Director of SomerStat responding to #208693 with a citywide heat map of overdoses and improperly disposed needles.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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Other HHS

205684: That the Director of Health and Human Services appear before this Board to discuss efforts to support individuals on the autism spectrum and educate first responders about autism.

The schools are working with HHS to make programming more accessible for students with autism, such as sections at events with reduced noise or distractions. The City is also working with Cambridge Health Alliance to build connections among the autism community. The department received funding for a navigator program to focus on students with challenges and their parents to reduce absenteeism and support environments that support the necessary healthcare directives. Councilor Clingan wondered if there was a curriculum for first responders, not just the School staff. Mr. Kress shared that the Chief has noted that there is training for emergency personnel. There are also an access and functional needs curriculum within emergency preparedness, and there is work to ensure that this information is in the CAD system to enable a reverse-alert to take place. Mr. Kress is the contact for Public Health Emergency Preparedness, and Somerville is a leader in this area. The PHEP database is maintained by the Fire Department, and information can be added by calling 311 or 911. Mr. Kress will share the rules around how this information is protected and maintained.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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208262: That the Director of Health and Human Services, with this Council’s Committee on Public Health and Public Safety and regional substance abuse service providers, prepare an Opioid Response Report similar to one published by Cambridge.

See 209321

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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209321: Director of Health and Human Services conveying the Somerville Opioid Overdose Data Report for 2018.

There were 7 opioid-related deaths of Somerville residents in 2018, and 8 opioid-related deaths that occurred in the City in that same year. Chair Davis relayed that Councilor McLaughlin wanted to note that a recent survey showed a spike in elementary aged students experimenting with cocaine. Mr. Kress suggested that this may have been the youth-risk survey and, because the numbers were so low, 1 response could show a spike; so that data point may be misleading.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

208474: That the Administration and the Director of Health and Human Services use revenue from recreational and medical marijuana for substance abuse treatment resources.

With the Community Benefits Agreements, a Substance Abuse Coordinator has been hired, and has completed over 15 individual assessments with students. There is also group work taking place and the work will continue to expand. The Chair emphasized that as the funds increase, treatment should be the priority focus for how that money is used. Ms. Webber clarified that public funds are not eligible to be used for private uses, such as scholarships for individuals, but could be used for treatment that would benefit that community at large.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

208617: That the Directors of Health and Human Services, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development, or SomerPromise report on the possibility of establishing a transitional jobs program, modeled after programs in Cambridge and other communities.

Mr. Kress noted that the Community Services Manager initiated a program called Signals for Success, which was modeled in part on the Cambridge program and which the department is looking to expand. The goal is to focus on "year 13", the gap year after high school, and the department is looking for additional program funds.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

208821: That the Director of Health and Human Services discuss ways to avoid children's contacts with syringes in parks and public spaces.

Mr. Kress noted that there were only 22 reported instances of improperly disposed needles within the past 14-18 months. Anyone who finds a needle should call 311 or 911 and they will be disposed of immediately; residents should not touch needles. There are targeted needle in exchange programs, in partnership with Fenway Health, who is the partner chosen by the state to provide the service in Cambridge and Somerville. The organization does not separate the numbers by city, but the majority are in Cambridge. The highest volume of sightings in Somerville is Davis Square. There is also a kiosk open 24 hours/day for disposal at the Police Department, and the Health Department will also accept needle during business hours.

Ward 4 resident Ms. Simione noted that the information on the website does not seem current. She is diabetic and is uncertain where to dispose of needles. Mr. Kress added that there is education in the schools and HHS monitors the information received through 311 and 911.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

208998: That the Administration perform an ADA accessibility audit of the entire city, including state property, and devise a compliance plan complete with a timeline for implementation.

Councilor Clingan noted that there is a plan in place but that it is dated and does lay out an aggressive timeline to address issues. He acknowledged an awareness of red tape, but suggested that the City focus

on pushing through the bureaucracy in the name of mobility, rather than settling for the identified 20 year target. Mr. Kress noted that most of this work falls under Capital Projects. The City did recently apply for a grant through the MA Office of Disabilities but did not receive the requested funds.

Mr. Kress emphasized a strong support for accessibility, but noted that DPW and Capital Projects are better equipped to handle specific issues. Ward 4 resident Ms. Simone added that trees embedded in sidewalks pose a significant barrier to traveling safely with her daughter, who is in a wheelchair. The Police Station does not have ADA doors, and barriers continue to increase. Another concern is that there is no way for the public to access issues that have already been reported. There are laws that are not even being upheld; and education and training to make improvements properly is critical. Mr. Kress is under the impression that there is a database and will look further into how it might be shared. He also suggested that Ms. Simone's input would be valuable as a volunteer to help with the advocacy component.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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209058: That the Director of Health and Human Services report to this Council the plan for an emergency response to the increased risk of disruption to the potable water supply due to water contamination from strong storms caused by climate change.

There are plans in place to get supplies from the state's supply network, and there are pre-selected distribution sites at the East and West Somerville Community Schools. These sites also have backup generators. The Chair clarified that this would only be in a situation where the MWRA could not provide potable water.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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209080: That the Director of Health and Human Services reach out to the numerous homeless people camping out in Foss Park and work to address their needs.

Mr. Kress did conduct a site visit and added that the Homeless Coalition is aware of these individuals and continues to check-in and direct and encourage them toward resources.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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209410: Director of Health and Human Services conveying a memo re: the small bottle survey results and recommendations.

Mr. Kress noted that this is a draft, and a goal was to limit exposure, but could go further toward regulation. With the new regulations around tobacco, there may be an impact to the advertising and the environment will change. Chair Davis added that a ban could be problematic and does not address the core problem; it could come with a potential negative health impact and a negative impact to small businesses. A nuanced approach is needed and he commended the response. Mr. Kress reminded the Committee that the proposed "bottle bill" at the State House would address this issue as well.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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Housekeeping

208385: That the Director of the Personnel provide the Committee on Public Health and Public Safety with state Core Competency training certifications, and any other training

documents, for all Animal Control Officers.

Councilor Clingan requested a response in writing, as it has not yet been provided.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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208386: That the Chief of Police provide the Committee on Public Health and Public Safety with all animal control calls logged over the last 6 months.

Councilor Clingan reiterated the request for a written response.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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208952: 15 residents submitting comments re: airplane noise.

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| RESULT: | PLACED ON FILE |
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