

June 28, 2020

To whom it may concern,

I am writing today to ask the committee to please consider me for a Resident position on the newly formed Memorialization Committee.

I was born and raised in Somerville. I grew up on Winslow Avenue in Ward 6, and am a product of the city's public school system. I attended primary school at the Brown and Kennedy schools, and graduated from Somerville High in 2002. I received my undergraduate degree in urban planning from the College of Art, Architecture and Planning at Cornell University, and have a Master's in Journalism from the University of California at Berkeley. I currently work at Google as a content strategist for the News suite of products.

As a member of the Memorialization Committee, I would work to ensure the public assets, thoroughfares, and spaces of this city represent the Somerville I have known all my life. I would aim to create places that reflect the community around us, where anyone, of any background, can make a home.

When I was small, Somerville did not always enjoy the best reputation. So much has changed in the decades since it was mocked and derided as *Slumerville*. But over time, through forward-thinking and great civic efforts, it has earned a place as one of the most highly desired communities to live in, not just in Massachusetts, but throughout the U.S. I aim to create spaces where Somervillians can encounter that progress in the everyday: places where people can see themselves, their loved ones, and the values they cherish upheld for all to see.

I would especially work to shine a light upon the diversity this community has to offer. As a student, I would walk the halls of Somerville High hearing a half-dozen languages spoken at any one time: Spanish, Vietnamese, Brazilian Portuguese, Albanian, Nepalese, Haitian Creole. And yet, for all the rich cultural wealth I knew growing, it is still hard to find visible legacies beyond the largely Irish-Italian-and-occasionally-Portuguese heritage that once dominated Somerville's demographic makeup. Now more than ever, our public spaces and facilities deserve to reflect *all* that Somerville has to celebrate.

This is, after all, a community that has been a home to presidents and ambassadors, to writers and artists, and voices that have changed the world. The city we see around us should reflect the diversity of thought, experience, and community contributions made by the people of Somerville. For that very reason, I do not expect this will be an easy job. By any measure, the great quality of our citizenry has always been disproportionate to the size of our small community.

Thank you for your consideration, and please let me know if there is anything further I can provide that would help the committee in reaching a decision.

Best,  
Kerri Connolly