



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Housing, Community Development and Equity Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, July 1, 2026

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Strezo at 6:02 pm and adjourned at 7:10 pm on a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilors Link and Strezo), 1 absent (Councilor Sait).

Others present: Ohemeng Kyeremateng – Director of Recreation, Eric Weisman – Commissioner of Public Works, Amanda Nagim-Williams – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Denise Taylor – Director of Communications and Public Engagement, Luisa Oliveira – Director of Public Safety and Urban Forestry, Madalyn Letellier – Assistant City Clerk, Legislative Services.

Roll Call

Present:	City Councilor At Large Jon Link and City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo
Absent:	Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [26-0722](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Housing, Community Development and Equity Committee Meeting of April 15, 2026.

RESULT:	<u>ACCEPTED</u>
AYE:	City Councilor At Large Link and City Councilor At Large Strezo
ABSENT:	Ward Five City Councilor Sait

2. Order
(ID # [26-0082](#))

By Councilor Strezo
That the Director of Parks and Recreation report on the stock and condition of previously installed playground communication boards that assist nonverbal children in playtime.

Chair Strezo gave an overview of a communication board, designed for children who may be non-verbal, autistic, or young and they can point to a picture to express their needs rather than trying to find the words. Director Oliveira shared the boards have now become standard for all playgrounds. In response to the Chair Director Oliveira shared if anything is broken, damaged, or needs to be replaced a 311 request can be entered and it will be addressed.

RESULT:	<u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u>
AYE:	City Councilor At Large Link and City Councilor At Large Strezo
ABSENT:	Ward Five City Councilor Sait

3. Order
(ID # [26-0059](#))
- By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Strezo
That the Director of Mobility provide an update on the Kensington Connector.

Director Oliveira provided an update on the Kensington Connector sharing that Public Safety and Urban Forestry (PSUF) alongside Mobility has applied for a grant called “One Stop for Growth” for \$1.3 million for infrastructure and construction. There is a desire from the departments to go back to working groups and fine tune ideas. Director Oliveira shared the challenge to bring water and light as it goes under 12 lanes of highway and the goal to make it a better and safer experience to pass through. Addressing safety concerns Mass Department of Transportation (MDOT) added signals that have aided in safety. Director Oliveira, in response to Chair Strezo, stated the physical requirements to add a skate park do not exist and there are potential conflicts with pedestrians trying to pass through at the same time.

In response to Councilor Link Director Oliveira shared the grant money will allow the city to construct the project and install things such as lighting and improve the experience beyond temporary artwork.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link and City Councilor At Large Strezo

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

4. Order
(ID # [26-0052](#))
- By Councilor Strezo
That the Commissioner of Public Works and relevant departments discuss the future community use of Founders Rink for 2026 and beyond.

Commissioner Weisman spoke to the status of the Founders rink operationally. Commissioner shared that the rink has not had ice for several years so there is a plan to install ice over a month long period including the full preparation, fill, repairs, and build up to use. The targeted start date is September 1st. Director of Recreation Kyeremateng spoke to the programming elements of the rink. The Director shared a request for proposal (RFP) is in process to have a vendor work to put nonprofits in the rink and work to schedule the events through February. After February Recreation will look to take over the ice and continue with children’s programming, staff training, and adding activities off ice. Chair Strezo asked about the status of a zamboni, Commissioner Weisman confirmed a zamboni is in the city’s possession. In response to Councilor Link Commissioner Weisman shared an extra week of time that has been built into the lead up to consider any maintenance issues, staff have been on the roof to check compressors and ensure they are functioning, the exact age of the compressors is not known.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link and City Councilor At Large Strezo

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

5. Order
(ID # [26-0051](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Parks and Recreation provide an update on upcoming inclusive playground accessibility plans and redesign projects.

Director Oliveira spoke to the groundbreaking at the Kennedy Playground that is being phased with the school year in mind. Phase 1 is underway and the actual build out of the playground is planned for next summer. Efforts were made to find a middle ground between parking and increasing the schoolyard by 30% for the students, as a result there was a removal of 12-16 spots in parking. In response to Chair Strezo Director Oliveira stated conversations are continuously being had about parking and working with Traffic and Parking to mitigate congestion and the possibility of reserving space on neighboring streets. Director Oliveira shared tree plantings and water storm system management are happening as well.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link and City Councilor At Large Strezo

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

6. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [26-1033](#))

Conveying an update regarding item #26-0825, a Resolution that the Administration submit a written report to this Council regarding the timeline and process for staffing the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Coordinator role and update this Council on the plan to process ADA complaints and accessibility coordination when this position is vacant.

Director of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) Nagim-Williams was present to review the submitted memo. An update in the process is that Human Resources has moved to phone screens to fill the vacant position. In response to Chair Strezo, if a complaint comes into the designated email or phone number it is routed to the Chief Administrative Officer and either triaged or addressed directly.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

7. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [26-0973](#))

Director of Communications & Community Engagement conveying the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Accessibility Compliance update for city website and digital assets.

Director of Communications and Public Engagement Taylor shared the

regulations deadlines have been extended to April of 2027. This applies to websites, apps, and digital tools used on the city site, the Schools systems are not under this current revamp. By the original deadline of April 2026, the city had reached 90% compliance with the understanding that this is ongoing work. Since the original memo submission, compliance has gone up as the web team continues to work. Director Taylor spoke to specific websites that were targeted in the compliance work and the complexity that some bring. Director Taylor spoke to a specific use that has been added that allows pdfs to be converted to accessible forms, translation, screen reading capability, and live person support. Director Taylor shared there is an effort not to create any additional micro sites and a goal to merge current micro sites to have better control over accessibility. In response to Councilor Link Director Taylor spoke to the efforts being made to the Schools, they are individually conducting a full website overhaul and are working to maintain the current website while putting resources into a new site that will be fully compliant. Director Taylor shared the schools are self-sufficient and does not have exact details on where they are currently in the process.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link and City Councilor At Large Strezo

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait

8. Resolution
(ID # [26-1077](#))

By Councilor Strezo
That the Administration discuss the City's volunteer policy and its consistency among various city departments.

Chair Strezo spoke to the desire to understand barriers to volunteering and will hold the item for a future discussion. Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Nagim-Williams stated the administration hopes to share a more standardized process in the fall.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

9. Order
(ID # [26-1078](#))

By Councilor Strezo, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Hardt, Councilor Link, Councilor Mbah, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Sait, Councilor Scott and Councilor Wheeler

That the Director of Parks and Recreation discuss the cost barriers and equity constraints that prevent low-income residents and local youth from accessing Somerville programs, such as public skate time at Veterans Memorial Rink on early school dismissal days.

Chair Strezo shared the issue brought to her by a resident about equity concerns for students to be able to pay for ice time. Director Kyeremateng shared there are efforts being made through the request for proposal (RFP)

process to provide free resources to students so they can utilize the rink. In response to Councilor Link staff confirmed free resources are a priority in the process but it is not a requirement at this stage. Chair Strezo directed a question to Director Taylor about how the city can best engage with youth to notify them of this opportunity. Director Taylor stated communications would work together with schools and recreation to push information through already established channels.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK
COMPLETED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link and City Councilor At Large
Strezo

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait