

## Madalyn Letellier

---

**From:** Mary Burke [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 31, 2024 11:23 AM  
**To:** JT Scott; All City Council; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Unlawfully Towed, and the Greater Implications for Somerville Citizens  
**Attachments:** IMG\_4957.jpeg; IMG\_4955.jpeg; IMG\_4958.jpeg; IMG\_4956.jpeg

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

This email is from an external source. Use caution responding to it, opening attachments or clicking links.

---

Good Morning Counselor Scott and the Somerville City Counsel,

My name is Mary Burke and I am reaching out to you regarding an incident that occurred on the street that I live on in Somerville, Calvin street.

I have a valid Somerville parking pass. My street and all of the streets surrounding it have been under construction since September. There are times when the entire street has no parking signs (all attached to cones that can easily be moved) and times when they are no longer posted (my assumption is they move these cones to other zones where they are needed for construction).

I am contacting you because my car was wrongfully towed by the city of Somerville. On October 29th, after a doctor's appointment, I parked my car on my street a few houses down from my home. I am extremely aware and cognizant of the various no parking signs that have been placed and removed, and made sure there were no no parking signs around before I left my car. I was sick and did not go into the office that day, and did not leave my house until the following day, October 30th, at 5:30pm. I saw that my car was no longer parked on my street, and there was construction equipment on the street instead. In addition, the cones with no parking signs were placed around the equipment. Please find attached photos of these cones. These are old no parking signs that have been scribbled over with sharpie to say random dates. As you can see, some even have "City of Somerville" crossed out. I would not have parked there if these or any other cones were present at the time I was trying to park. The Somerville Police Department informed me that parking signs must be posted 48 hours in advance, and these signs must be called into the parking department to be validated. They also explained that a picture of the signs being posted should be supplied to the parking department for validation.

I spent 3 hours of my time, and \$170 to get my car back to me yesterday evening. I called the parking department this morning where they informed me that according to them, these signs were valid and had been called in to the department for verification. The Parking Department claimed that the signs were called in appropriately and posted appropriately last week. The dates they provided do not match the dates written on these signs, and I am not aware of any photos that exist of these specific signs being posted within the 48 hour requirement.

It is clear that the construction folks have moved these cones around at their leisure and need as they've continued construction on the surrounding streets, placing them back on my street at only the precise

moment they needed the space to be cleared. As I am sure you can understand, I find this to be incredibly negligent on the part of not only the construction/gas company, but the City of Somerville as well. The City has allowed this company to essentially decide when and where citizens can park, and has stripped law abiding, tax paying citizens of their agency to safely and reliably park their cars. By these rules, anyone can place a cone with a scribbled on sign anywhere they'd like, call the city, and have a car towed at any time.

I want to stress that while this was a distressing, time consuming and expensive issue to handle, I am much more concerned with the implications this incident can have on other individuals within our community. Individuals who have low income, who are disabled, those who are single parents and simply those with very little outside support have the potential to have lasting issues and impacts from this singular instance. For example, it is the end of the month today. There are citizens of Somerville who may have to choose between paying rent or getting their car back. Maybe that individual has already been late on rent this year, and is forced to leave their car in the tow yard and continue to incur fees each day before they can afford to get their car back. Or if this individual was a single parent, and had to choose between feeding their family and getting their car, which they use to take their children to school and to get to work each day. Or perhaps a disabled elderly citizen, with no family or connections, needs their car to get around to the grocery store and doctor's appointments? Get to the pharmacy to get essential medications? Not to mention the fact that likely, no citizen in these instances will have the time, energy or resources to seek justice from the city and at the very least get their money back.

All of this to say, citizens that pay taxes, exorbitant rent prices, and follow traffic and parking laws (including paying for a yearly parking sticker that at this point seems to be for decoration) should not have stricter rules to abide by than gas companies and construction companies. It is not right, it is unjust, and it shows the citizens of Somerville that they are not valued and have no agency.

My hope is that not only will I receive the \$170 I am rightfully owed, but that this incident will spark real investigation into the practices of the companies doing construction as well as the Somerville Parking department itself. I plan to file a claim with the city, but I also plan to reach out to any relevant city officials, state officials, as well as local media. I am sure I am not the only person that has dealt with an instance like this.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. I appreciate that there are many pressing matters in our world, and in the City of Somerville at this time, however it is essential to protect our most vulnerable citizens from injustices that can have lasting negative impacts on their upward economic mobility and general quality of life.

I look forward to your response. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me via phone at [REDACTED].

Best,  
Mary Burke

[REDACTED]  
Somerville, MA 02143