



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Public Health and Public Safety Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 11, 2023

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Kelly at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 7:39 pm with a roll call vote of all in favor (Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Davis, and Chair Kelly), none opposed, and none absent.

Others present: Neha Singh – Mayor’s Office, Jeffrey DiGregorio – SPD, James Donovan – SPD, Karin Carroll – HHS, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Charlotte Kelly, Vice Chair Lance L. Davis and Matthew McLaughlin

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1149](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Public Health and Public Safety Committee meeting of July 10, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Kelly, Vice Chair Davis and Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin

Housing

2. Order (ID # [23-1289](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Director of Housing and the Director of Health and Human Services update this Council regarding repeated requests to provide shelter to homeless residents.

Taken together with item 23-1285. Dir. Carroll gave an overview of services and divisions within HHS. She said that the Administration is making it a priority to expand the warming center that opened 4-5 times last winter, which would use ARPA funding. She talked about the day engagement center, which opened about a year ago but has taken a while to be fully staffed. The day engagement center is also a candidate for expansion but is in the early stages. Dir. Carroll also discussed harm reduction strategies based primarily in Davis Square, onsite vaccination, a shower van project in partnership with SHC that may be running by fall, and the possibility of the city becoming a provider to enroll people into MassHealth onsite. She ended by summarizing a recent meeting with city and state staff to explore partnerships.

Councilor McLaughlin asked if a permanent location for the warming center had been found, to which the answer was no, and asked if any of the temporary locations are in East Somerville. Dir. Carroll said that they are looking at several sites across the city for a one-year RFP. Councilor

McLaughlin also asked for more information about short-term shelters. Dir. Carroll said that these would be overnight winter shelters offered 7 days a week.

Chair Kelly asked about the process of leasing spaces short-term for the city and about what has been done to find immediate shelter for unhoused residents. Dir. Carroll said that most immediate work happens through the Somerville Housing Coalition (SHC) or the Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS), and that the focus of HHS is on preventing people in unstable situations from becoming homeless.

One focus of the discussion was on case workers' services and the referral process. Councilor McLaughlin stressed that it is important to build relationships with those in need. He asked about initiatives and resources specifically available in East Somerville. He noted that Fenway Health mostly operates in Davis and that case workers do not do street outreach. The councilor requested information on how many intakes case workers do a week, as well as a copy of the after-action report for the warming center. Chair Kelly asked for the report to include funding sources.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Communication (ID # [23-1285](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin
Conveying numerous locations suitable for temporary and long-term shelter for the homeless population.

Taken together with item 23-1289.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Resolution (ID # [23-1284](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Administration update this Council regarding increases in homelessness and the direct responses taken by the city to address those increases.

Taken together with item 23-1283.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Resolution (ID # [23-1283](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Administration update this Council on the progress toward providing direct homeless services to East Somerville residents in temporary and permanent locations within Ward 1.

Taken together with item 23-1284. Councilor McLaughlin said he thinks the city could be doing more regular outreach and needs more resources to do so. He added that he currently works most often with COHR and SPD in East Somerville. Dir. Carroll said that the Somerville Housing Coalition

(SHC) is doing the majority of outreach in the city.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Safety

6. Order
(ID # [23-1290](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Health and Human Services engage Somerville Cares About Prevention to conduct compliance checks on establishments serving liquor to prevent over-serving of alcohol.

Taken together with item 23-1286. Dir. Carroll said that new alcohol establishments have been meeting with the director of SCAP to do required training on over-serving. She added that SPD and Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) are the only entities that can do compliance checks, but the city could look to reduce the density of alcohol establishments in other ways. Capt. Donovan said that compliance checks have been focusing on underage serving, but have done better with over-serving lately in specific target areas, such as lower Broadway. He also mentioned that SPD is looking to get a court clinician involved in cases of public intoxication where addiction may be present.

Councilor McLaughlin noted that recently, publicly intoxicated people have been asking random passersby to buy them alcohol. He asked if this is legal. Capt. Donovan said that he thinks there is no liability on the purchaser in that situation. Councilor McLaughlin asked when the last time SCAP programs were used. Dir. Carroll said that SPD or ABCC would need to be involved in any compliance checks, but she believes that the program has not been used since before COVID. Capt. Donovan said he would have Det. Howe speak to the liquor stores about underage and straw purchases.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [23-1286](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Chief of Police conduct compliance checks on liquor stores.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Order
(ID # [22-2111](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen and Councilor Wilson

That the Chief of Police report to this Council, the percentage of requested traffic details for construction projects that have been filled by Somerville Police Department officers, filled by non-Somerville police officers, and unfilled, for the past three years.

Chair Kelly asked about the column on unfilled hours in the attachments (“PHPS - 2023-09-11 Copy of 2021 Details (with 22-2111)” and “PHPS - 2023-09-11 Copy of 2022 Details (with 22-2111)”). Capt. DiGregorio said that the hour column is probably included because different details vary in

length. There are 4 and 8 hour details, though they can sometimes be longer. Chair Kelly asked how SPD determines which detail requests go unfilled. Capt. DiGregorio said that priority is determined by location. He also explained the detail assignment process, which uses an app. Chair Kelly also asked how the details are paid from contractor to city to officer. Capt. Donovan explained the process and noted that physical checks are delivered to Auditing.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Health

9. Order
(ID # [23-1294](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Burnley Jr.

That the Director of Health and Human Services update this Council on the progress of Safe Consumption sites.

Taken together with 23-1172. Dir. Carroll said that these sites are now called Overdose Prevention Centers. She said staff met with the state, who is looking at the feasibility of OPCs statewide. A state feasibility study is expected to finish by the end of 2023. Dir. Carroll spoke to some ongoing initiatives, such as focus groups, a program training library staff to deliver Narcan, sharps pickup and clean needle delivery by Fenway Health, and research into a dual kiosk that can dispose of used syringes and dispense clean ones. She added that sharps containers are to go into library bathrooms.

Councilor Davis asked if the plan on a harm reduction facility is to move forward as soon as possible, or whether that piece is dependent on legal questions being resolved. Dir. Carroll said that there is no update on this now, but the city is keeping all options on the table for harm reduction services.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

10. Resolution
(ID # [23-1172](#))

By Councilor Kelly and Councilor McLaughlin

That the Administration update this Council on locations of sharps collection stations and work with the Commissioner of Public Works to install sharps collection stations in all public restrooms.

Taken together with 23-1294.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

11. Order
(ID # [23-0618](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr.

That the Director of Health & Human Services work with this Council and community partners to determine if the city has a current PILOT agreement with Mass General Brigham and other healthcare providers, and how mental health services can be a component of such agreements, particularly as part of a mental health gun buyback program.

Liaison Singh said that the Administration is prioritizing the PILOT task force so they can provide recommendations. Chair Kelly asked for the whole council to be provided a copy of the PILOT agreement.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- PHPS - 2023-09-11 Copy of 2021 Details (with 22-2111)
- PHPS - 2023-09-11 Copy of 2022 Details (with 22-2111)