



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Rodent Issues Special Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 30, 2024

6:00 PM

The meeting took place virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:02 PM by Chair CLingan and adjourned at 7:39 PM with a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilor Wilson and Councilor Clingan) 0 opposed and 1 absent (Councilor McLaughlin)

Others present:

Director of Inspectional Services - Nick Antanavica, Assistant City Solicitor - Jay Piques, Environmental Health Manager - Colin Zeigler, Environmental Health Coordinator - Alicia Privett, Legislative Services Manager - Madalyn Letellier.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan and City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson
Absent: Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0707](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Rodent Issues Special Committee Meeting of May 14, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

2. Order (ID # [24-1277](#))

By Councilor Clingan, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Mbah and Councilor Sait

That the Environmental Health Manager prepare a written report for the next meeting of this Council's Special Committee on Rodent Issues, on the number of Residential Rodent Control Assistance Program requests submitted from January 1, 2024 to date, including the average waiting time for inspections and bait station installation and a plan of action to expedite the process.

Environmental Health Coordinator Alicia Privett spoke on the attached presentation highlighting the data requested by councilors. Councilor Wilson asked a ballpark on how many properties in Somerville contain part or all of a rodent infestation. Coordinator Privett stated it is hard to determine what properties are acting as a highway for rodents and how many are housing, Environmental Health Manager Colin Zeigler shared that there are thousands of properties that are conducive to housing rats. Councilor Wilson asked has there been research into piloting A24 traps in private business locations throughout the city. Coordinator Privett shared A24 are for single kill and the SMART traps are for larger collection in areas such as Davis or Union where there is a high volume of activity. Using an A24 could be less beneficial as they are one kill at a time, and they have been shown to

encourage scavenging of other animals picking up the dead rodents and eating them.

Councilor Clingan asked for clarification around the complain process for rodents. Director of Inspectional Services Division (ISD), Nick Antanavica, stated the complaint comes through 311 or email, an inspector goes out to the property to perform an initial inspection, discretion is used on a warning and ticket issuance. For a first-time warning instructions will be delivered with the reason for the violation. Councilor Clingan sponsored a member from the public, Peter Forcellese to speak. Peter Forcellese shared he has put in 32 311 requests on a single property and has not heard from the city as the problem persists. Director Antanavica stated ISD does not respond to every complaint as they get thousands, the city continues to monitor the issue. Councilor Wilson asked a closing question on the likelihood of transferring rodents' costs to problem businesses. Director Antanavica shared the department is exploring a dumpster or restaurant license fee and they continue to investigate other incentives.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

3. Order
(ID # [24-1276](#))

By Councilor Clingan, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Mbah and Councilor Sait

That the Directors of Constituent Services, Inspectional Services and Health and Human Services jointly prepare a written report for the next meeting of this Council's Special Committee on Rodent Issues, on the number of rodent complaints received from January 1, 2024 to date, including the information detailed within.

This item was discussed with ID # 24-1277.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Order
(ID # [24-1275](#))

By Councilor Clingan, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Mbah and Councilor Sait

That the City Solicitor review Ordinance 11-038 (Rodent Control) and provide opinions for the next meeting of this Council's Special Committee on Rodent Issues on 1. whether city inspectors may enter onto private property; 2. how much time must elapse subsequent to the issuance of a citation for the city to "cause the work to be performed and charge the owner of the property and place a lien against the property for expenses incurred"; and 3. the minimum amount of time that may be imposed pursuant to 11-038 (e).

Assistant City Solicitor Jay Piques spoke on the attached memo that provides answers to the three proposed questions. On question 1 he additionally stated there is a clause in the ordinance that allows exceptions to the warrant clause, but an imminent threat to life or safety would need to

be present. There is a lower standard for an administrative search warrant that is outlined in the ordinance and that should be obtained by an inspector prior to entering a property. Chair Clingan asked the Director of ISD if he was aware ISD could obtain an administrative warrant. Director Antanavica shared the department has used them in the past when cooperation from the owner has not been available. The circumstances to get one include determining when the return on time and investment will be valuable. Councilor Wilson asked if there should be an ordinance that states to not provide food, shelter, or water and enforce fines if found to be violating. Director Antanavica stated the presentation accompanying ID # 24-12 77 will answer questions on outreach, changing programs, and increase in ticketing. On the second question Assistant Solicitor Piques stated there are provisions in the state sanitary code and how significant the infestation is that will determine the timeframe, it is again a case-by-case scenario.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [24-1035](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Inspectional Services inspect the area at the intersection of Broadway and Glen Street for rodent activity.

Director Antanavica said they had gone out and a memo with all relevant information is being drafted to send to the committee.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Order
(ID # [24-0203](#))

By Councilor Clingan

That the Environmental Health Coordinator discuss the current contract with the pest control company that administers the city's rat abatement program.

Coordinator Privett stated the current contract is with B&B Pest Control and new bait techniques will be explored under this contract. Manager Zeigler stated the current contract goal is for the company to go out 2-3 days a week, anything more is a lift on their end and for city staff to maintain. There are more other more extensive programs available, but it comes down to the cost.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- Rodent Issues - 2024-09-30 Opinion to Council re Rodent Control Ordinance (with 24-1275)
- Rodent Issues - 2024-09-30 Rodent Committee Presentation (with 24-1276, 24-1277)