



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 31, 2024

7:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom, was called to order by Chair Pineda Neufeld at 7:01 pm and adjourned at 9:33 pm with a roll call vote of all in favor (Councilor Mbah, Councilor Sait Councilor Burnley, Councilor McLaughlin and Chair Pineda Neufeld), none against, and none absent.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo – Mayor’s Office, Cindy Amara – Solicitor’s Office, Jason Piques – Solicitor’s Office, Nicholas Salerno – Elections, James Donovan – SPD, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

The committee voted to enter executive session at 8:55 to discuss items 23-1802, 23-1799, and 23-1798 with a roll call of 4 in favor (Councilor Mbah, Councilor Sait, Councilor Burnley and Chair Pineda Neufeld) and 1 absent (Councilor McLaughlin). Open session reconvened at 9:26 pm with all members present. No votes were taken in executive session.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Judy Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Willie Burnley Jr., Naima Sait and Wilfred N. Mbah

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1821](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee Meeting of December 6, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah
ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

For Committee Discussion

2. Order (ID # [24-0116](#)) By Councilor Pineda Neufeld That the City Solicitor appear before the Committee on Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters to discuss the scope and role of the Committee in confirming various appointments.

Assistant Solicitor Piques gave an overview on the civil service appointment process, such as the core mission of civil service and the bypass process. Then he described what has changed since the Fairchild and Kylie decisions. He stressed that the Civil Service Commission will look closely at allegations of untruthfulness. Solicitor Amara said that if the City Council does not abide by the principles set by the commission, a failure to confirm would be treated as a bypass and would need to meet the standards of a

bypass. She added that the body would need to provide reasoning if it fails to confirm a candidate.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the solicitors for guidance on specific questions for candidates, including “What does Black Lives Matter mean to you?” The Law Office said that asking such a question would be “a risk” to the city, if the confirmation were not upheld, due to the perceived political association.

Chair Pineda Neufeld also asked about reasons the committee could enter an executive session, which Solicitor Piques explained is designated by Open Meeting Law.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

For Committee Interview

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0084](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Austin Brower to the Board of Elections Commissioners.

Commissioner Salerno introduced Mr. Brower. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked what the candidate hopes to accomplish. Mr. Brower answered that he wants to keep open communication with the public, promote elections effectively, and improve recruitment and retention of election workers.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

ABSENT: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0017](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Mark Matthews to the position of Fire District Chief.

Chief Breen introduced Capt. Matthews. Councilor Mbah asked how new development in the city, especially at Assembly and Boynton Yards, has affected Fire operations, and how the candidate will improve responses to challenges the department is currently facing. Capt. Matthews said they will need to continue trainings on high-rise fire prevention and response, and he talked about challenges around keeping an aging population safe and the increased staffing needed for rescues. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate to describe how his leadership contributed to repairs at the Teele Square station and whether he has any concerns for his role.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah
ABSENT: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin

5. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-1802](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Matthew Lorizio to the position of Police Officer.

Capt. Donovan introduced Mr. Lorizio. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked why the candidate wants to be an officer in Somerville and whether he has any concerns about the role. Mr. Lorizio said that he is looking forward to taking all trainings available to him to become a better officer. Councilor Mbah asked how the candidate would handle a difficult interaction, to which Mr. Lorizio said being open and able to talk is important.

Councilor Mbah sought guidance on whether it is appropriate to ask the candidate about Black Lives Matter. Liaison Carrillo relayed advice from Solicitor Amara that the question would be risky for the city, and Chair Pineda Neufeld said that Councilor Mbah could decide, given that advice, whether to ask the question. Councilor Mbah asked Mr. Lorizio what Black Lives Matter means to him. Mr. Lorizio said that he believes in the message and that as an officer, he can help invoke and empower that group.

Councilor Sait asked how the community could benefit from the candidate's experience. Mr. Lorizio spoke to de-escalation and crisis intervention trainings from his current work.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate if he received and understood the notice of a potential executive session. No votes were taken on this item in executive session.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

NAY: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

6. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-1801](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of GyuLerna Pierre to the position of Police Officer.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

ABSENT: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1799](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Igor Bitencourt to the position of Police Officer.

Capt. Donovan introduced Mr. Bitencourt and noted that the candidate's ability to speak Spanish and Portuguese was an asset to the department. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked why the candidate wants to be an officer in Somerville and whether he has any concerns about the role. Mr. Bitencourt said that he saw officers interacting with the community frequently growing up and that he liked the idea of giving back to the community this way. Councilor Mbah asked how the candidate would handle a difficult interaction. Mr. Bitencourt spoke to the need to understand the variety of backgrounds Somerville residents come from to best provide care and ensure their safety and the safety of those around them.

Councilor Mbah asked the candidate what Black Lives Matter means to him. Mr. Bitencourt said that he thinks the idea is important and that those involved with BLM should continue to invoke their First Amendment right to express themselves. Councilor Sait asked how growing up in Somerville helped the candidate. Mr. Bitencourt said that he made connections while spending time outside and attending events.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate if he received and understood the notice of a potential executive session. No votes were taken on this item in executive session.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

NAY: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1798](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Brian Clancy to the position of Police Officer.

Capt. Donovan introduced Mr. Clancy. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked why the candidate wants to be an officer in Somerville and whether he has any concerns about the role. Mr. Clancy said he always admired what police stand for and is interested in officers' inclusion in educational programs.

Councilor Mbah asked how the candidate would handle a difficult interaction. Mr. Clancy said that everyone reacts differently and to find the root cause of the problem. He added that the voice is the most effective tool in those situations and that his experience working with patients would help him to reassure people.

Councilor Mbah asked the candidate what Black Lives Matter means to him. Mr. Clancy said that it is a social movement that opened peoples' eyes to

systematic racism. Councilor Sait asked the candidate how his experience will help Somerville, and Mr. Clancy talked more about his current work in a dialysis clinic.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate if he received and understood the notice of a potential executive session. Councilor Mbah moved to go into executive session to discuss items 23-1802, 23-1799, and 23-1798, and reconvene in open session after. The motion was approved with a roll call of 4 in favor (Councilor Mbah, Councilor Sait, Councilor Burnley and Chair Pineda Neufeld) and 1 absent (Councilor McLaughlin). A recess was taken to allow panelists to change meetings.

No votes were taken on this item in executive session.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

NAY: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

9. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1797](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of John Tivinis to the position of Police Officer.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

ABSENT: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin

For Committee Approval

10. License (ID # [23-1838](#)) Requesting confirmation of the re-appointment of Mary Battinelli as Constable.

Taken together with items 23-1788, 23-1787, and 23-1767. Chair Pineda Neufeld said that her intention with these items is to discuss them at the full City Council level, and she moved to discharge them without recommendation. Chair Pineda Neufeld added that the constables were interviewed thoroughly in a CAPM meeting January 2022, and she recommended watching that recording for more information.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

11. License (ID # [23-1788](#)) Requesting confirmation of the re-appointment of Alan Bishop as Constable.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

12. License (ID # [23-1787](#)) Requesting confirmation of the re-appointment of Darcy Haynes as Constable.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

13. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1767](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Laurie Brandt to the Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr., Ward Five City Councilor Sait and Ward One City Councilor Mbah