

John Long

From: Jennifer Ryan [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, July 31, 2020 9:43 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Concerns about Tufts reopening plan

Hi there,

I wanted to pass on a few concerns that I have about Tufts University students returning to campus in August before this Wednesday's meeting. As a resident of Davis Square, I'm very concerned that welcoming 10,000+ students from across the U.S. to our neighborhood is going to result in a drastic spike in coronavirus cases--and potentially set off a second wave of infections here. Specifically, I would like answers to the following:

- Many Tufts students are from out of state. What's the plan for these students arriving on campus? How will we guarantee that they safely quarantine for 14 days before going out in the neighborhood?
- I'm aware Tufts is taking steps to test its on-campus students. However, a good portion of students live off-campus. What measures are in place to ensure these students are following social distancing, masking, etc.?
- If Tufts students do set off a coronavirus spike in Somerville, how will that be treated? Is there a plan?
- How and why did the university choose to welcome all classes back to campus? To me, this seems wildly dangerous. Would they consider a more limited approach like Harvard or MIT has put in place?

Best,

Jen Ryan

John Long

From: Donna Adams [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, July 31, 2020 10:09 PM
To: John Long; Lance Davis
Subject: Special Council Meeting

The only safe solution for our community is to NOT allow the Tufts students to travel back here. Tufts plan is an ill fated experiment conducted during a pandemic that has claimed more than 150,000 lives and made deathly ill many more. Allowing Tufts to bring students back is a big risk and a recipe for disaster. The virus would love to resurge and rage through our community. The bold and safe way to protect our community is for students to take virtual classes from their home state until we have been vaccinated. Please don't let Tufts bring back students.

Donna Adams
West Somerville Resident

John Long

From: Joe Beckmann [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, August 1, 2020 2:27 PM
To: Rocco DiRico; City Clerk Contact; Marianne Walles; Kristen Strezo; Bill Shelton
Subject: Tracking changes in Covid locations

is ONLY possible with Wastewater testing, like that [BioBot](#) is in advanced stages of deploying. More advanced work in the same sector has been done by [AquaVitas](#) in Phoenix and is being discussed in [Seattle](#) and by California Senator [Diane Feinstein in the US Senate](#). With adequate monitoring of the biology, Tufts could be protected by the [new state law](#) regarding liability for any new cases. Without that law, and without wastewater testing to measure standards, Tufts could be risking their entire endowment with an early opening, given the precedent of the Holyoke Soldiers Home precedent of \$176,000,000 for 76 deaths. Given Tufts' community housing of around 3,000 students, and the 2700 seniors in Somerville alone who own housing with rental space, as well as our city as the most densely populated city in the Northeast, the entire endowment could evaporate by this December.

--

Joe Beckmann

[REDACTED]
Somerville, MA 02143
[REDACTED]

John Long

From: Claire Valentin [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, August 2, 2020 9:52 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Public Hearing on Tufts Reopening Plan

Dear Somerville City Council,

I am writing as a resident of the Teele Square neighborhood in Somerville to express my concern with the Tufts Reopening Plan. For months this spring, everyone in our community made significant sacrifices: staying indoors, isolated from friends and family, some losing their jobs and incomes, others tragically losing loved ones. We came together as a community, and succeeded in at least controlling this outbreak in Massachusetts. Now, Tufts proposes to completely upend our efforts with a reopening plan that some have described as "dropping a cruise ship" in the middle of the neighborhood. I ask that Tufts and Tuft students make the same sacrifices we are all called to make, dramatically reducing the number of students called back to campus and imposing far more stringent controls and quarantines. I also respectfully ask that the City expend resources to enforce quarantine and other rules in the neighborhoods surrounding Tufts University; students, staff and faculty should be facing severe fines and penalties if they fail to abide by rules including the 14 day quarantine for out-of-state travelers, the restriction on gatherings more than 10 people, and the requirement to wear face masks.

Thank you for your consideration and all your hard work through these difficult times.

Sincerely,
Claire Valentin
[REDACTED] Somerville

John Long

From: Martin Bures [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, August 2, 2020 6:12 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Tufts University Reopening Plan Comments

My wife and I live in Ward 7 with our two school-aged children. These are our comments regarding the reopening plan by Tufts.

We are very surprised and concerned by the Tufts reopening plan, the lack of communication that happened leading up to it - especially considering the volume of communication and lack of clarity regarding public school reopening. Nothing came out from the city and nothing came out from the School until we read about the plan in the news.

We have also just learned that we will now have Tufts students living below us off campus. For a school that already had a large portion of its students off campus, has this number increased now? Why is it the community's responsibility to house their students - especially in these circumstances? Who is liable if these students below us get us sick? We have two children who will be going to public school - could they endanger that as well? What are the enforcement mechanisms that will be applied to the off-campus students? Is there a hotline we can call to report them?

We are concerned that we seem to be prioritizing Tufts ahead of the local community regarding both public schools and general Phase 3. Based on what happened during the depths of the lockdown which coincided with graduation, I have no confidence in Tufts, its students and Somerville has not done anything to enforce this that I have seen. There were many parties during this time in our area off campus and there have continued to be over the summer.

I would give the college students and the public school students the same grade regarding social distancing - and for them we are talking about only 2 days a week of in-person instruction. If Tufts was only talking about having students that they bring back on campus, I would be a lot more comfortable with their plan. The off campus plan where it is voluntary by the students and with no visible enforcement causes me a great deal of angst.

The comments from the mayor seem to be when and not if so all of this appears to be a foregone conclusion which is very upsetting.

Martin Bures
[REDACTED]

John Long

From: Julia Toof [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, August 2, 2020 10:59 PM
To: City Clerk Contact; Mayor
Subject: Commentary on Tufts Reopening Plan

Hello,

I am stating for the record that I am outraged and disgusted that Tufts is bringing back students to campus full-time, even with the amount of testing they plan to do early on.

Besides the fact that young people in the region keep being caught violating social distancing mandates, whether holding large house parties or gathering in crowds at the beach, the fact is that college students from various hot spots do not need to be here and will likely spread COVID within the community. This is clearly only being done for financial reasons.

It's especially upsetting given that during the quarantine, my elder child (who is almost 3) was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and referred for integrated preschool, which is probably not going to happen. My child needs to learn social skills and needs various therapies, which are far more effective in person, not by telehealth, and after struggling for months to get these therapies set up, it would be heartbreaking to have everything be remote again. It's unfathomable that so many will have to suffer locally with closed and/or remote schools while college classes are unnecessarily held in person.

Tufts reopening is against the interests of the vast majority of Somerville residents, and I implore you to strongly pressure Tufts to reverse this decision, as Berklee College of Music just did.

Thank you,
Julia Toof

John Long

From: Marilyn Bibeau [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 3, 2020 12:27 PM
To: John Long
Subject: Webinar

My remote work computer will not all me access. I wanted to state strongly that I do NOT believe Tufts University should open for on campus classes for the fall semester. They should stay with remote learning. The influx of students could cause Covid-19 spikes despite the University's best efforts and precautions. Protect the residents of Somerville & Medford!

Respectfully,
Marilyn Bibeau

John Long

From: Whitney Davis [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, August 3, 2020 10:44 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Tufts reopening

I was very upset to hear that Tufts was reopening. I live off of Holland and depend on Davis Square for goods and services, but I realize if the students are back I will have to change to a safer neighborhood. I also walk daily , and was relieved in May to be able to walk to Tufts without having to avoid young people partying without masks.

I am a high risk senior and live alone, so my world is already small without having to find safer alternatives to my own neighborhood.

Please consider how we can all safely live here together.

Thank you.

Whitney Davis

Sent from my iPad

John Long

From: Amanda Cegielski [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2020 8:47 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Comment on Tufts reopening plan

Dear Somerville City Council,

I am a current Somerville resident writing in regards to the Tufts reopening plan which places Tufts University students, staff, and community members at risk.

First, I do not believe that the university is seeking feedback from the community in earnest. On August 4, Tufts hosted a community meeting about their reopening plans. I learned of this through the Somerville City Council's website (<https://www.somervillema.gov/tuftsreopening>). There is no mention of this meeting on the Tufts website, @TuftsUniversity twitter feed, or the @TuftsCommunity twitter feed. The Tufts Community site (<https://communityrelations.tufts.edu/>) has a broken link to the university's reopening plans.

I am basing my comments below on the most recent version of the plan I was able to find:
https://coronavirus.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2020-06/Fall_2020_Campus_Guide_ASE_Students.pdf.

Tufts has laid out three options for students (page 9):

1. Participate in the fall 2020 semester in person.
2. Participate in the fall 2020 semester remotely.
3. Take time away from Tufts.

If Tufts is allowing students to participate in their academic coursework remotely, then they must have the infrastructure prepared for all courses to have a remote component or offering. Therefore, there is no need to bring students to campus, as the academic experience from a student taking courses online from Somerville are the same as a student taking courses online from their summer location. Or, if Tufts is planning on having courses in-person, this is a denial of the severity of the pandemic. An hour long in-person lecture is probably equal to the risk of seeing a performance in a theater -- an activity banned until phase 3.

The plan as outlined by Tufts does not indicate the frequency of testing, just that it will be frequent. I worry that frequent testing will be cut as the financial picture at Tufts worsens (source: <https://tuftsdaily.com/news/2020/04/20/tufts-anticipates-significant-budget-deficit-from-covid-19-costs/> and <https://president.tufts.edu/news/2020/05/28/update-on-university-budget-actions/>). This places students and the community at risk for a superspreader event. A student who is exposed on Monday would expose others through in-person classes, gym attendance, library visits, and dining hall meals for an additional two weeks, all of which are allowed activities.

Students will be allowed to use the gym (page 17). Although the gym is in Medford, this will be an opportunity for students to engage in contact across cohorts. What we know about the coronavirus is that it is airborne (source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/04/health/239-experts-with-one-big-claim-the-coronavirus-is-airborne.html>) and gyms place its users at risk. Having the gym open removes the risk reduction strategy of residential cohorts.

Online learning does not provide the same experience as in-person learning. The desire of Tufts University to have an in-person semester is understandable, but we are in a pandemic with 160,000 dead nationwide. I wish circumstances were different and we had strong national leadership that prevented this situation. But, placing 18-22 year olds in "residential cohorts" of 6 to 12 on campus denies the reality of the situation -- students who follow the rules of the Tufts reopening plan risk COVID-19 exposure through the allowable activities of class attendance, gym attendance, and consumption of on-site meals at dining halls. The virus knows no city boundary, and to have students come back in a situation that risks their life, the lives of staff, and the lives of Somerville residents is wrong.

We must avoid a scenario where, nestled between Somerville and Medford, Tufts is able to abide by the lowest common denominator of their combined safety protocols. We have an obligation to Tufts students who are Somerville residents, and the logic that has led us to remote education at SPS is no different here.

Thank you,
Amanda Cegielski

John Long

From: Maxim Sheinin [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2020 11:29 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Tufts reopening plan

To Whom It May Concern,

As a resident of the Davis square neighborhood in Somerville, I am following closely Tufts fall re-opening plan. I must admit that the current plan is concerning. Specifically, the plan is heavy on testing, but not forceful enough on restricting student gatherings that can spread the virus. Over the past months we have seen how partygoers, mostly young people, have seeded numerous coronavirus outbreaks across the country. And once outbreaks occur, they will seep into the community and vulnerable people will be at risk.

Therefore I believe Somerville needs to demand a much stricter approach from Tufts on student gatherings:

- Attendee limits should be enforced (though preferably in a conciliatory manner, not by the police; potentially student leaders responsible for monitoring and enforcement should be nominated)
- Limits should be especially strict for indoor gatherings (preferably not more than 10 people)
- Alcohol consumption needs to be curtailed, drinking age limit should be strictly enforced
- It'd be ideal to require students to download a contact tracing app if available

Thank you,
Maxim Sheinin, Ph.D.

John Long

From: K Molloy [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, August 5, 2020 7:50 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: My comments regarding Tufts' reopening plan

Dear Somerville City Council:

I listened to the entire presentation and Q&A of Tufts' reopening plan last evening, and am not convinced that undergrads are suddenly not going to think and behave like 18-22 year olds this fall. The Tufts folks at the presentation, and the administrations of other universities in the area that are planning similar strategies, are invested in some serious magical thinking. It's very upsetting because this is a public health crisis and they are jeopardizing our community with a setup for another surge.

Our community has worked hard to abide by safe practices to keep Covid-19 transmission from overtaking the city. It's a sad difficult year. Mayor Joe has done a good job of slowing the pace of the reopening phases to keep us safe (at the expense of criticism of postponing phase 3 again). I'd hate to see these efforts come to naught because of Tufts' short-term self-interest.

Best regards,

- Karen Molloy

[REDACTED]
Somerville, MA

John Long

From: Mike Wiser [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, August 5, 2020 9:30 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Cc: Mary Jo Rossetti; Katjana Ballantyne
Subject: Re: Statement on Tufts Reopening
Attachments: Statement of Mike Wiser on Tufts Reopening UPDATED.pdf

Hello,

I apologize, but I would like to replace the statement sent earlier with the that is attached. I have corrected an important typo. The correct file should have the filename: "Statement of Mike Wiser on Tufts Reopening UPDATED.pdf".

Thank you!

-Mike

> On Aug 5, 2020, at 6:21 AM, Mike Wiser [REDACTED] wrote:
>
> Hello,
>
> Attached please find my statement on Tufts Reopening plans for the Special Meeting of the Somerville City Council on
> Wednesday, August 5, at 7 PM.
>
> Thank you!
>
> -Mike
>
>
>
> <Statement of Mike Wiser on Tufts Reopening.pdf>

Statement of Mike Wiser on Tufts Reopening

I would like to convey my concerns regarding the plans that Tufts University has for reopening. I am specifically concerned about how Tufts is planning to ensure quarantine compliance for students arriving from out of the region and living in off campus housing.

Governor Baker has issued a COVID-19 Travel Order which requires all travelers to Massachusetts from specified states to quarantine upon arrival. (The order is available here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order>) The order lays out very specific guidelines for how these travelers are to quarantine. The governor's order is quite specific about the conditions of this quarantine.

Some of the specific provisions of the governor's order include:

- Travelers, along with their travel party, must separate from all other people for 14 days.
- Travelers must not be in public or otherwise leave the identified quarters.
- The living quarters must have a separate bathroom facility for each individual or family group. Access to a sink with soap, water, and paper towels is necessary. Cleaning supplies (e.g. household cleaning wipes, bleach) must be available in the bathroom.
- During the quarantine period, no one else should be in the living quarters other than those in the Travel Party, including hotel staff or delivery persons, as applicable.
- Food must be delivered to the living quarters.

It seems that for students living in shared off campus housing compliance with the governor's order will be difficult, if not impossible. The vast majority of rental units in Somerville do not have separate bathroom facilities that would allow arriving travelers to isolate from one another. I have lived in multiple rental units in the area and visited *many* more and I have never seen one that would allow the type of isolation that is required by the Governor's order.

Yesterday, I attempted to raise this issue (and one other) at the Tufts University Community Town Hall. I also raised this issue in advance of the meeting with Tufts University's Director of Government and Community Relations Rocco Dirico. He has promised to respond, although I have not yet received a response.

Having reviewed Tufts updated Covid-19 website I found that there are extensive plans for students living on campus, but off campus students are largely left to fend for themselves. This leaves a number of important questions unanswered:

- Is Tufts gathering information from off campus students about the exact dates they are arriving in the area?
- Is Tufts gathering information about whether students' off campus accommodations include the facilities necessary for proper isolation (i.e. ascertaining whether individual bathrooms available in the off campus housing)?

- How will Tufts handle situations where students have leased off campus housing that does not provide a private bathroom?
- Will Tufts provide food delivery to off campus students during their quarantine?
- Will Tufts be checking on off campus students during the quarantine (either in person or over the phone) to ensure compliance with the quarantine?
- What disciplinary action will be taken against students who break their initial quarantine? Have students been informed of this?
- Will Tufts allow arriving out-of-region off campus students to quarantine in a shared apartment with in-region students who are not maintaining a quarantine?
- Will anyone be allowed to enter or leave a shared off campus apartment before all residents have passed the testing protocol?

I believe that these are important questions that Tufts should address to ensure the safety of our community.

John Long

From: L D [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, August 5, 2020 11:13 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Testimony Submission for Tufts' Reopening Hearing Aug. 5

I am a property owner and long-time resident in Somerville and wish to submit the following statement to the public hearing on Tufts's reopening for August 5th.

As a high-risk resident surrounded by college students living in off-campus housing, I am very concerned that Tufts' reopening this Fall, at full capacity, puts the community at risk. Students come from all across the U.S. and the covid infection stats are trending poorly almost everywhere. Whenever people gather in large numbers, the infection seems to spread. Tufts is intending to use the less accurate tests and this does not inspire confidence. Students living off-campus are already gathering closely together in backyards and on porches without wearing masks, and these houses are very close to neighboring houses. On top of that, many are not wearing masks on public sidewalks and streets.

Worsening matters is the widespread issue of apartments being rented beyond the legal limit of four people. In neighborhoods all around the university, there are five-bedroom or more apartments. Instead of eight students per a two-unit house, there may be ten or more, and it makes it difficult to know precisely how many live in a house. Recently, I observed eleven students not wearing masks gathered closely in the yard behind my house. This has been a problem for years with regards to noise disturbances, which the university has not been able or willing to control. Now that we face a highly-infectious and life-threatening virus, these over-occupied houses pose an even greater risk, which the university may also not be able or willing to control effectively.

I attended Tufts' virtual community meeting and they did not give concrete examples of how they would monitor and enforce safety and quarantine protocols. They only stated that student ambassadors would roam the streets to pass out masks to those who were not wearing them, and that they trusted their students to follow the guidelines. They urged us to call the Tufts' police with any complaints, yet they did not explain what disciplinary actions would be taken regarding those who do not quarantine or conduct risky behavior.

Also of concern, Tufts' president stated that they have not tested the students who have been living off-campus this summer. They are not testing until August 14. We do not know if any of these students quarantined for two weeks when they arrived as a precaution, since the plan has not been implemented yet. They should have already tested these students to minimize risk to our community.

As a long-time resident who has lost a lot of sleep over the years due to loud parties or small groups of raucous students gathering near my home or roaming the streets, I can attest that not all of Tufts' students are as community-minded as the university panel seemed to believe. Students are not always polite or willing to cease behavior which causes others harm, and some landlords can also be unwilling to instruct their tenants to adhere to the city ordinances. I worry that I will continue to observe risky behavior and that it will not be corrected effectively because the administration is more concerned about the needs of the students than those of the surrounding community in which they live, work, and study.

Based on past experience, and on current observation of student behavior, I do not feel safe. A plan of action can only be successful if the participants adhere to the rules.

I hope that the City will help to protect long-time residents whose homes are surrounded by large numbers of students, and I implore the City to investigate the issue of over-occupied houses, which now poses a health risk on top of noise disturbances.

Lynnette C. Doolin