



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 26, 2020
REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Katjana Ballantyne	Chair	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	Vice Chair	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Absent	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	

The meeting was held in the Committee Room and was called to order by Chair Ballantyne at 6:05pm and adjourned at 7:59pm.

Councilor Scott was not in attendance due to illness.

Others present: Matt McLaughlin - Ward 1 City Councilor; Jesse Clingan - Ward 4 City Councilor; Annie Connor - Mayor's Office; Sarah Lewis - OSPCD; Melissa Woods - OSPCD; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees; Stephen Moore; Amelia Aboff; Tori Antonino; Enid Kumin; Kat Rutkin; Renee Scott; Larry Yu; Wig Zamore; Barbara Steiner

Approval of the February 10, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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OPEN SPACE

209624: That the Committee on Open Space, Environment and Energy provide feedback on the SomerVision 2040's chapters on 1) Public Space & Natural Environment and 2) Climate & Sustainability with respect to metrics, key tasks, and other strategies as noted within.

Ms. Woods introduced the members of the public who worked on these chapters of the document as part of the Working Group. Stephen Moore and Ameila Aboff focused on the Climate & Sustainability chapter. Oliver Sellers-Garcia was the staff captain for this chapter. Each chapter outlines: strengths; challenges and opportunities; goals and takeaways; and potential tasks. Ms. Woods highlighted the need to work with our state and national partners on these issues, and noted that we are affected by the actions of others. Each working group was tasked with approaching the work through an equity lens. The focus as well was on the largest greenhouse gas contributor, which is buildings. Ms. Woods noted that every idea that is included in the potential tasks is a good idea, and can be evaluated later for implementation feasibility. Ms. amelia noted that the City has done a great job within its scope, but there was a specific

aim to expand beyond the envelope of municipal buildings. She added that many of these numbers were called out for being aspirational, but that should be considered a good thing, and commitment to these goals is a statement of our values as a community.

Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that great progress has been made with new buildings, but wondered what could be done to address retrofitting existing buildings. Mr. Moore suggested starting with something like Community Choice Aggregation, and anything to reduce reliance on fossil fuels should be a priority. Ms. Smeia also encouraged education for both landlords and renters. Finding the nexus between the City and landlords or renters could be helpful to identify where and how data can be collected. Mr. Moore clarified that the range of steps that could have an impact is significant, and does not always need to be a complete overhaul. Ms. Woods noted that what is needed in our current building stock is significant, but should not come at the expense of current tenants.

Chair Ballantyne asked whether there is tracking for the buildings that have been retrofit, and whether Mass Save shares any data. Ms. Woods and Mr. Moore noted that data has been difficult to get. Chair Ballantyne noted that cataloguing the data from CitizenServe related to work that has been done could be valuable. Councilor White wondered what incentives could be offered for landlords, many of whom own multiple rental units. Mr. Moore suggested that the market might be the biggest driver of this. Ms. Smeia suggested that, in an ideal world, leases could include disclosures about things such as the presence of lead paint or the average utility costs. Mr. Moore encouraged finding synergies between chapters to address and implement the items outlined as potential tasks.

Chair Ballantyne asked further how the equity elements were determined, and there was a self-identified group focused on this, but the working groups each identified their equity goals. Ms. Woods noted that this is just a starting point. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about Green Leasing, and the idea is to align incentives between landlords and tenants. Ms. Smeia responded to Chair Ballantyne's previous question about whether anything was left out of this plan to note that, though it may not be under the purview of the Council, integrating the work into the school system could be a powerful opportunity. The Chair noted that Mr. Sellers-Garcia is working with the Schools, and many if not all, have some sort of Green Club.

Mr. Yu added that this plan has come a long way from the 2030 iteration, but the science indicates that the problem is only getting worse. He also noted that the cities of Boulder and Ann Arbor have both used rental licensing programs to incent and then require landlords to retrofit their buildings. It is a lengthy time period (approximately a decade) to put a program of that nature in place. Councilor Mbah asked about implementation and Ms. Woods noted that the working group and the administration will be working with the City Council and many other groups on implementation, and recognized that it will require many trade-offs.

Councilor White asked about grants offered by the City for work that can be done and noted that it is something that could be implemented rather quickly. Ms. Lewis commented that there has been a SomerVision tracker in place since the 2030 version, to continue to measure metrics as the city grows. This will be modified and upgraded with the new metrics suggested. Ms. Antonino added that gas-powered landscaping tools and the carbon emissions from bare space should be incorporated into the measurement of greenhouse gas emissions in the future.

Ms. Woods introduced the section on Public Space and the Natural Environment, which was staffed by Cortney Kirk and captained by Rachel Borgatti. Members in attendance who participated were Enid Kumin, Tori Antonino, and Kat Rutkin. Ms. Woods noted that a primary challenge is the dense nature of the community. Some of the important goals were around access and inclusivity in all spaces. Chair Ballantyne noted that the goal of access is an important one, but does not seem to be embraced by the City. This is evidenced by Conway Park and Dillboy Field being locked. Ms.

Woods noted that the concerns of the report focused more on ability to walk and bike to the locations. There is a consideration that constant use may not be healthy for the field itself.

Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that public space can be found by closing streets, and an inventory of options where this is possible should be a priority. Ms. Woods and Ms. Antonino agreed that the right-of-ways are about a quarter of the City's land area, so there is opportunity there. Ms. Antonino elaborated that there are competing interests within equity. She added that privately-owned public spaces are a good approach to acquiring additional space and noted that one thing that was missed in the document, is the need for planting native pollinators. Ms. Kumin also expressed that the role of trees cannot be understated and should be considered within the context of the ecology of the area.

Councilor Mbah asked about the progress since the previous report and Ms. Woods shared that the 2030 plan was the first time an acreage goal was set, and it was aspirational, but helped push toward the 20 acres that were created in the past 10 years (some of these are still in the planning and pre-construction phases). Ms. Rutkin noted that many of these goals do not compete against each other and can be addressed simultaneously, such as pollinators and access. Councilor White asked about green roofs and if they reduce the heatsink effect. Ms. Antonino clarified that the zoning in the transform areas will help this considerably, but incentives can be considered for other areas as well. Ms. Kumin noted that there are places in Boston where commercial entities have made their roofs available, so it could happen in Somerville as well and would be valuable. She added that there was no magic solution to addressing making the parks more accessible.

Ms. Scott expressed a concern that this work was done in silos, and there was no work done to measure costs and determine how to maximize all of the important things that crossover from various sections. She also shared that there was not enough attention given to ecologically valuable green space. The City needs more wooded areas rather than turf or even grass fields. Mr. Zamore added that working with neighboring communities could help lead to more creative solutions. He also noted that transportation is one of the greatest energy-creators, which are not counted. Somerville has the most highway miles and commuter rail miles per square mile in the state. These are the source of a significant health impact. Connected to this, the danger of emissions is significant and proximity to this needs to be considered when determining where to add green space locations. Ms. Antonino elaborated that open spaces and green spaces are not equal and potential health issues need to be considered and addressed.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209441: That the Director of SPCD include the entirety of West Somerville Neighborhood School open space for renovation planning as discussed at a December 2018 community meeting.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209444: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Finance advise this Council, in writing, why, with an appropriation of \$9.3 million, the grass field at Lincoln Park was incorrectly installed the first time.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209605: That the Director of SPCD provide this Council with the most recent updates on

any plans for Foss Park.

Ms. Connor shared that there was an update provided by the state delegation, who were finally able to meet with DCR yesterday. Senator Jehlen noted that they have amended the plan to reorient the field to allow for the preservation of six oak trees, but three ash trees will come down. There will be a minimum 2:1 replacement ratio, and the type and location of those will be selected in conjunction with the Urban Forestry Division. The plan is for the construction to begin in April and the field to be open in August.

Chair Ballantyne noted that accurate numbers were not given when the City Council was asked to make funding decisions. Councilor White clarified that what was stated was that there would be no additional hours based on the re-opening of Foss Park. Ms. Connor added that communication with DCR is difficult and details on timelines and plans have been provided to the best of the administration's ability; in this case the information was received just yesterday.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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FLOODING

209546: That the Director of SPCD discuss what can be done to mitigate the flooding of Alewife Brook Parkway and Mystic Valley Parkway.

A written response was received from Mr. Raiche.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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HOUSEKEEPING

209607: That the Director of SPCD provide this Council with a report on the history of Conway Park and what contaminant testing had been completed prior to its establishment as a public park.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209717: Director of Parks and Recreation responding to #209152 re: Lincoln Park athletic field data.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209544: That the Director of Parks and Recreation discuss the impacts, updates and usage of Founders Rink being used for indoor soccer.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209718: Director of Parks and Recreation responding to #209544 re: using Founders Rink for indoor soccer.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Handouts:

- Response to various flooding orders 2020Feb21-1 (with 209546)
- SomerVision Info (with 209624)