



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, December 9, 2024

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Mbah at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 7:30pm on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Scott, Wilson, and Mbah), 0 opposed, and 2 absent (Councilors Strezo and Sait). Councilor Sait left the meeting at 7:25pm.

The committee went into recess from 6:17-6:25pm and returned on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Scott, Wilson, Sait, and Mbah).

Others present: Sue Yerkes - Director of Parks and Recreation, Neha Singh - Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait, City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson and Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

Absent: City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo

- 1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1473](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee Meeting of October 3, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Mbah, City Councilor At Large Wilson and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

ABSENT: Ward Five City Councilor Sait and City Councilor At Large Strezo

- 2. Order (ID # [24-1029](#))

By Councilor Mbah
That the Director of Parks and Recreation, the Director of SomerPromise and the Out of School Time Coordinator, report to the City Council on the status of children and teen participation in the summer recreation and education programs.

Chair Mbah started the conversation asking what the full access of spots is available to children, and did children get turned away due to capacity limits or due to parents being unable to complete the enrollment process in time due to access or language needs. In response Director Yerkes shared at times, due to staffing, children are turned away for capacity reasons or unable to book because the program is not accepting any new spots. She shared if one program is booked the summer program tries to direct those

children to other programs. In addition she shared there are laptops available on site to register with parents and staff is available to facilitate that process during building hours of Monday-Friday 8:00-4:00pm. Continued conversation stated Parks and Recreation is still performing outreach to reach all homes in Somerville for children who want swim lessons able to attend and increased access to the Dilboy pool before the public swim times will begin this summer to aide in additional swim lessons. Discussion led to the eb, and flow of programs and Parks and Recreation tries to follow what is being asked for by the public as programs change each year.

Chair Mbah inquired if Parks and Recreation can assist in costs to which the Director responded she could confer back with the department and get the committee a response. Discussion continued and Director Yerkes shared there are multiple waiver opportunities and families are directed to resources as needed so no child is turned away for being unable to pay. Chair Mbah proposed the question of how to increase the use of existing facilities in the summer, Director Yerkes shared there is a need for two full time staff and change the flooring in the Founders Rink for children to utilize. Parks and Recreation is currently fully staffed but looks to continue to hire.

Councilor Sait asked how Parks and Recreation determine what space to use, and in response it is a process of permitting which goes through the schools and Parks and Recreation is priority after the schools. Continued conversation led to the discussion of programming running in classrooms and Parks and Recreation has not made it a priority for respect of the teachers and their space. Councilor Sait also inquired the frequency and cadence of newsletters that get sent out and Director Yerkes stated that information is not handy and will get back to the Councilor.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

- 3. Order (ID # [24-1415](#))

By Councilor Sait and Councilor Pineda Neufeld
That the Director of Parks and Recreation provide this Council with the list of youth program offerings, their cap and their enrollment data in 2023 and 2024.

This item was discussed with ID #24-1415.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Order
(ID # [24-0106](#))
- By Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Davis, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Sait, Councilor Mbah, Councilor Clingan and Councilor Ewen-Campen
- That the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment work with this Council and Green and Open Somerville to develop a job description for an Invasive Species position to spearhead outreach, education, and citywide invasive plant species removal and to allocate funding for such a position in the FY 2025 budget.
- Renee Scott from the public was present to speak on this item in addition to the memo submitted entitled, *OSEE - 2024-12-09 Memo (with 24-0106)*. Renee Scott emphasized the importance of addressing and acknowledging the Invasive Species that exist, and the educational resources needed within the city to help residents address the on-going problem. Director Singh confirmed the city is happy to meet with Green and Open Somerville to continue this conversation and efforts are largely being filled by Public Space and Urban Forestry (PSUF) and the Department of Public Works. Councilor Wilson asked if the administration is not moving forward with a dedicated position but rather the resources in PSUF. Director Singh shared the focus in the FY25 budget was in schools and workforce and were unable to include this position in the FY25 budget and are discussions internally and with external discussions are on-going to FY26.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
5. Order
(ID # [24-0370](#))
- By Councilor Burnley Jr.
- That the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment update this Council on the design, cost, and implementation timeline for the city's composting program.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
6. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [24-1552](#))
- Director of Sustainability and Environment conveying an overview of the Commonwealth's Clean Energy Goals, Electric Sector Modernization Plan, demand growth in Somerville, and capital projects underway or planned.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
7. Public
Communication
(ID # [24-0457](#))
- Green & Open Somerville and Earthwise Aware submitting comments re: invasive plant species.
- This item was discussed with ID # 24-0106.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

Referenced Documents:

- OSEE - 2024-12-09 Memo (with 24-0106)

