



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 19, 2024

7:00 PM

The meeting took place virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 7:06 PM by Chair Strezo and adjourned at 9:13 PM with a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilor Clingan, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, and Councilor Strezo) 0 opposed.

Others present:

Amanda Nagim-Williams - Director of Racial and Social Justice, Lisa Robinson - Director of Food Access and Healthy Communities, Luisa Oliveira - Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry, Kelley Hiland - Deputy Director of Health and Human Services, Ashley Speliotis - Director of Council on Aging, Kimberley Hutter - Legislative Liaison, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo, Ward Seven City Councilor Judy Pineda Neufeld and Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1823](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations Committee Meeting of December 11, 2023.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

2. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0708](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations Committee Meeting of May 15, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

3. Order (ID # [24-1005](#)) By Councilor Clingan
That the ADA Coordinator provide this Council with an update on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan Task Force.

ADA Coordinator Adrienne Pomeroy spoke on the attached memo. Councilor Clingan asked two follow up questions around the 2013 mentioned transition plan and whether the city is on track to meet those goals and what data exists to prove so. She responded that the plan is to use the plan developed in 2013 moving forward and to create those data points for comparison as they move forward with the Transition Plan Task Force.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

4. Order
(ID # [24-0911](#))

By Councilor Clingan and Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry provide this Council's Committee on Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations with an update on the inclusive playground swing project being worked on in collaboration with parent advocates.

Director Oliveria relayed the recent updates on the process for getting inclusive playground swings installed. In July she appeared before the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities (SCPD) explaining the many factors that are involved, Public Space Planner Meg Koglin has been taking inventory on the existing bucket swings, hardware, and fall zones that currently exists in the parks. The next steps are to research universal connectivity, and it can take up to 4 weeks to go through procurement, 6-8 weeks to receive the swings, and then installment, the department has hopes to have the inclusive swings installed by winter. Chair Strezo sponsored community member Nicole Cannon to speak. Nicole shared how she has a 4-year-old disabled daughter and the huge positive impact having the inclusive swings have had on her family. She also included how important it is to educate the public on these inclusive swings and to bring awareness to the community. Councilor Clingan then asked Director Oliveria how the decision is being made to roll out ten swings at the start and not every park, and whether this is a final decision or if the city is able to accept swings as a gift. Director Oliveira stated that they are still in the pilot process, evaluation is still needed on pricing of swings, any gifts or donations need to be done through communication with law. She commented on the many ways the city and the SCPD can work together in the future to build inclusivity in the city and all councilors agreed some sort of celebration should take place once the pilot swings are installed.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Resolution
(ID # [24-0428](#))

By Councilor Clingan, Councilor Scott and Councilor Burnley Jr.

That the Administration provide an update on the Braille embosser purchased in summer 2023, including its current location and the plan to put it to use.

ADA Coordinator Adrienne Pomeroy spoke to the attached memo. After her presentation Councilor Clingan asked to confirm the purchase dates of the embosser. Adrienne responded the embosser was initially delivered to the Library in June of 2023 and has since been moved to the Racial and Social Justice department based on best use practices. Chair Strezo sponsored SCPD members Harriette Ranvig and Holly Simione to speak, they spoke to the beneficial partnership with Perkins and how the city needs to keep in mind braille embossing when creating documents. Holly Simione responded to Councilor Pineda Neufeld's question on how best to do that and

recommended setting up a task force.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Order
(ID # [24-1032](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Mbah, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Sait, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson That the Director of Health and Human Services discuss with this Council how to serve residents through an ongoing transit equity program when the Taxi to Health program funding ends in October.

Lisa Robinson, Director of Food Access and Healthy Communities highlighted the continued efforts that remain in place to try and continue to serve as many residents as possible after the sunseting of this program on October 31, 2024. She highlighted multiple avenues that have been looked at including but not limited to partnering with Metro Area Planning Committee, shuttle bus services, securing more funding through grants, and convening a group of staff to continue to research and explore more sustainable options. Kelley Hiland, Deputy Director of Public Health, and Ashley Speliotis, Director of Council on Aging (COA), both spoke to similar efforts being done in their departments to work to find a solution within the financial constraints of the municipality. Councilor Pineda Neufeld restated the urgency she feels towards finding a solution for the cities residents and asked what type of communication is going out to let the participants of this program know it will no longer be available. Director Robinsons shared the expiration is written on every voucher that is being handed out and information including resources for other services is being shared. Director Speliotis shared there has been a spike in the member registration through the COA office for residents who are eligible to utilize that programming. Councilor Clingan asked what the gap in services is needed and if there has been any discussion to how Boston runs their programming. Director Robinson shared during the Taxi to Health closure they are gaining data on what gaps exist and what modes people will need to return to, as well as the department has tried to reach out to Boston with no success to gain information on how they fund their own voucher program.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [24-0376](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the Director of Racial and Social Justice update this Council on policy proposals from the Anti-Violence Working Group convened last year.

Director of Racial and Social Justice Amanda Nagim-Williams spoke on the attached memo that provided updates on the work that has been done to date and continued plans. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked considering the

violence that has ensued at the library if this working group has been a part of any of the conversations to find a solution. Director Nagim-Williams clarified that the working groups focus was not on the library incident during their meetings in the past, but the members are prepared to answer any questions that are directed towards them. Councilor Clingan asked to follow up questions around what types of programming can be exapted to come out of this working group and if there are any short-term interventions in place. Councilor Strezo highlighted the importance of any interventions including teen girls in violence. Director Nagim-Williams responded the three key working areas are on digestive violence, traffic violence, and gun and gang violence, all of which were areas that came out of the Public Safety For All Initiative. Within that there is focus on highlighting how young people experience violence in all those areas and the working groups focus is mainly on mapping out long-term solutions and educating and helping residents understand what resources are available to them.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- Equity - 2024-09-19 Memo 9.19.2024 AVWG (With 24-0376)
- Equity - 2024-09-19 Memo 9.19.24 ADA Transition (wth 24-1005)
- Equity - 2024-09-19 Memo 9.19.24 Braille Embosser (with 24-0428)