



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

6:30 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Ewen-Campen at 6:32 pm and adjourned at 8:41 pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Strezo, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Others present: Shumeane Benford - Police Chief, Charles Femino - Public Safety Consultant for the Housing Authority, Amanda Nagim-Williams - Director of the Department of Racial and Social Justice, Kimberley Hutter - Legislative Liaison, Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Kristen Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Judy Pineda Neufeld

Absent: Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0872](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee Meeting of April 30, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0656](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Salma Kazmi to the Human Rights Commission.

Salma Kazmi has been a resident of Somerville for nearly two years and expressed interest in joining the Human Rights Commission (HRC) as a way to become more involved in the community. She emphasized her desire to help strengthen community connections and ensure inclusive representation across Somerville.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked Ms. Kazmi about her familiarity with the HRC and her prior involvement. Ms. Kazmi noted that she had attended an HRC event focused on homelessness and local intervention strategies. In response to questions about pressing issues in Somerville, she cited potential federal funding cuts and their impact on elderly and disabled residents, highlighting the importance of building strong, connected communities to support vulnerable populations.

Ms. Kazmi also shared her background in interfaith work, particularly between Jewish and Muslim communities, and her involvement with Somerville for Palestine. She expressed interest in helping ensure that space exists for open, respectful dialogue around complex issues, including the conflict in the Middle East. She emphasized that her approach to community building includes centering empathy and listening across lines of difference.

When asked by Councilor Strezo how she would remain neutral and represent all residents, regardless of her personal beliefs, Ms. Kazmi said that her work in racial justice and interfaith dialogue has taught her the importance of honoring multiple perspectives. She affirmed her commitment to upholding the HRC's procedures and maintaining trust and fairness in all interactions.

Councilor Strezo thanked Ms. Kazmi for underscoring the value of open dialogue in a diverse city like Somerville. She asked how Ms. Kazmi would respond to concerns that her affiliation with a Palestinian group might be viewed as discriminatory. Ms. Kazmi responded by highlighting her interfaith work, her personal connections to people affected by violence in Gaza, and her belief in creating space for all voices to be heard. She concluded by stating her commitment to engaging in hard conversations and doing what is best for the broader community.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Strezo and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

3. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-0653](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Jovana Calvillo to the Human Rights Commission.

Jovana Calvillo, a therapist who works with individuals experiencing trauma and substance use issues, is being considered for appointment to the Human Rights Commission. She shared that she is passionate about immigrant rights and is the daughter of Mexican immigrants. Ms. Calvillo emphasized that both her lived and professional experience inform her commitment to ensuring equity and support for all members of the Somerville community.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about Ms. Calvillo's prior involvement with the HRC. She responded that she had attended a meeting focused on heat mapping. When asked about the most pressing issues facing Somerville, Ms. Calvillo identified immigrant rights as a key concern. She

noted recent incidents involving the abduction of residents and also highlighted the importance of supporting trans individuals and those facing substance use challenges.

Ms. Calvillo is a member of several local organizations, including the Somerville Educators Union, MAMAS, and Somerville for Palestine. In response to questions regarding impartiality, particularly in relation to the conflict in the Middle East, Ms. Calvillo stated that she would not use her role on the Commission to promote personal beliefs. She emphasized that, as a therapist, she is trained to hold space for a wide range of perspectives and to listen without judgment. She affirmed her commitment to welcoming all individuals and prioritizing constituent needs.

When asked how she would respond to complaints against herself or the Commission, Ms. Calvillo said she would approach concerns with an open mind and a willingness to understand different perspectives. Councilor Strezo raised questions about whether some of Ms. Calvillo's affiliations could be perceived as discriminatory and asked how she engages in dialogue. Ms. Calvillo responded that, for her, dialogue begins with listening. She emphasized the importance of hearing others' perspectives before responding and said she welcomes feedback and conversation, especially around difficult issues.

Councilor Strezo also asked whether Ms. Calvillo could serve as a defender of all people and how she would navigate situations where the Commission may be at odds with the city administration. Ms. Calvillo stated that her goal is to help foster healing and understanding. She added that the Commission was created in response to concerns about discrimination within city government and affirmed her commitment to making the Commission a safe and accessible resource for all Somerville residents.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

NAY: Ward Three City Councilor Strezo

4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [25-0404](#))

Requesting confirmation of the re-appointment of Sean Browne as Somerville Housing Authority Police Officer.

Chief Benford expressed his support for the reappointment and thanked both Officer Browne and the City Council for their continued collaboration.

The committee entered into Executive Session at 7:11 PM, on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Strezo, McLaughlin,

Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 0 absent, to discuss item 25-0404

The committee returned to the regular meeting at 7:17 PM and Chair Ewen-Campen announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session, other than the vote to adjourn.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0403](#)) Requesting confirmation of the re-appointment of Michael De Bethencourt as Somerville Housing Authority Police Officer.

The committee entered into Executive Session at 7:23 PM, on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Strezo, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 0 absent, to discuss item 25-0403

The committee returned to the regular meeting at 7:25 PM and Chair Ewen-Campen announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session, other than the vote to adjourn.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

6. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0402](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Alfred William Rymill III as Somerville Housing Authority Police Officer.

The committee entered into Executive Session at 7:30 PM, on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Strezo, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 0 absent, to discuss item 25-0402

The committee returned to the regular meeting at 7:34 PM and Chair Ewen-Campen announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session, other than the vote to adjourn.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0900](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Dylan Lambert to the position of Police Sergeant.

Chief Shumeane Benford offered his strong support of the appointment, noting Officer Dylan Lambert's years of dedicated service to the department and the community. He highlighted Lambert's pursuit of academic growth, including his current enrollment in law school, as an asset that will strengthen the department's leadership and approach to policing.

Chair Ewen-Campen asked Officer Lambert what new challenges he anticipates in transitioning to the role of sergeant. Officer Lambert responded that one of the most significant opportunities will be to mentor and support officers under his supervision. He acknowledged that managing a diverse and dynamic team will be both a challenge and a responsibility he is ready to take on.

Councilor Clingan inquired about Officer Lambert's receipt of the department's lifesaving medal. Officer Lambert shared that during a flash flood event, he responded to a call where a woman was trapped in her submerged car. He swam through floodwaters to reach the vehicle, identified that the window was above the waterline, and broke the window to pull her to safety.

The committee entered into Executive Session at 7:45 PM, on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Strezo, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 0 absent, to discuss item 25-0900

The committee returned to the regular meeting at 7:46 PM and Chair Ewen-Campen announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session, other than the vote to adjourn.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0899](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Eli Kim to the position of Police Lieutenant.

Chief Benford spoke in support of Eli Kim's appointment, noting his leadership, personal development, and focus on education. He shared that there are currently 11 lieutenants in the department and emphasized Mr. Kim's readiness to take on the role.

Mr. Kim said he hopes to help create positive change in the city. He acknowledged that moving from Sergeant to Lieutenant will come with

challenges, including the need to take on more responsibilities and operate at a broader level. He also noted that working with people from different generations, genders, and races requires thoughtful leadership and a different approach for each individual.

Councilor Clingan commented that Mr. Kim's resume placed a strong emphasis on leadership and reflected his wide range of experience, both professionally and personally.

The committee entered into Executive Session at 7:58 PM, on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Strezo, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 0 absent, to discuss item 25-0899

The committee returned to the regular meeting at 7:59 PM and Chair Ewen-Campen announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session, other than the vote to adjourn.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

9. Order
 (ID # [25-0757](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That this City Council convene in Executive Session with relevant departments, to discuss the interaction between the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and Racial and Social Justice Department and to receive an update on what steps and goals have been established to resolve the disconnect between both parties.

Councilor Strezo said this stemmed from a disconnect during a March meeting between the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the Racial and Social Justice (RSJ) Department. A member of the Commission shut down the meeting, and there were questions about whether the proper procedures and bylaws were followed. She described the situation as a bubbling pot and said that the only way to have a full discussion, since it involves a personnel matter, would be through Executive Session. When told by the Law Department that this conversation could legally happen in open session, Councilor Strezo clarified that the goal was not to embarrass anyone. She stressed that the Commission for Persons with Disabilities is a volunteer-led body made up of residents who care deeply about the issues and step up to serve their city and that dedication deserves to be taken seriously.

Councilor Clingan said that the issues raised have not been fully addressed and asked whether any steps have been taken to begin remediation between the parties. Director Amanda Nagim-Williams, speaking on behalf of the

RSJ Department, said that the department has not received any formal requests for mediation. Councilor Clingan said he was disappointed to hear that. Chair Ewen-Campen said he wants the Commission to be able to function and that all city commissions should be working together. He said he believes mediation is a good next step. Liaison Kimberley Hutter said this is a very important commission, and the Mayor has invited the chair to discuss a path forward. But she emphasized that mediation requires buy-in from both parties. Director Nagim-Williams said that the RSJ Department has reiterated its willingness to work with members of the disability community. She noted that there must be a commitment to mutual respect and good faith before mediation can happen. She said that while RSJ staff have made multiple attempts to reach out to the Commission for Persons with Disabilities, including sending memos, they have not received responses, and some commissioners have specifically asked them not to attend meetings.

Director Nagim-Williams added that the Commission has held three meetings since the March incident, and RSJ staff were present at two of them. Councilor McLaughlin raised concerns about the Commission holding meetings without RSJ staff present and asked who has the authority to end a meeting, and whether the Commission is subject to the Open Meeting Law. Liaison Hutter confirmed that that all boards and commissions are subject to the Open Meeting Law, and that meetings are opened and closed by a vote of the body. She acknowledged that a staff person acted inappropriately and said the city has spoken to that staff member and attempted to speak with the Commission as well.

Chair Ewen-Campen concluded by saying that it is easy to make a legal or procedural mistake if City staff are not there to support the meeting, and that those mistakes can lead to serious problems. This is not just about whether City staff attend, but about ensuring the Commission is able to function and be supported in doing its work properly.

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

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld