



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 17, 2021

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	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Ballantyne at 6:03pm and adjourned at 8:28pm.

Councilor Ewen-Campen arrived at 7:10pm due to a Somerville Redevelopment Authority meeting.

Others present: Lauren Racaniello - Mayor's Office; David Shapiro - Law; George Proakis - OSPCD; Luisa Oliveira - OSPCD; Vanessa Boukili - OSPCD; Tom Galligani - OSPCD; Viola Augustin - OSPCD; Oliver Sellers-Garcia - OSE; Hannah Payne - OSE

Approval of the November 9, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Ban Utensil Ordinance

207884: That the City Solicitor draft an ordinance to ban the use of plastic flatware.

Chair Ballantyne noted that there have been no negative reactions to this, even from takeout and ice cream businesses. Many seem to already be moving in this direction, and are not including plastic flatware in delivery orders. Small businesses have a number of regulatory frameworks to comply with and have asked that this be delayed for 9 months to a year to decrease regulatory pressure, similar to what was done with the plastic bag and straw bans.

Chair Ballantyne sponsored Stephen Mackey, Somerville Chamber of Commerce, to speak, and he added that this is the right way to go and many restaurants are already there. Mr. Mackey elaborated that many businesses are still in the process of adapting to COVID-19, and those who are unable to comply are likely the most vulnerable. The horizon for pandemic recovery will be lengthy and he asked for consideration that businesses have stock of these items to utilize. Councilor Scott asked if the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and Board of Health had been consulted, and Chair Ballantyne noted that she has not reached out to them yet but will be doing so. Councilor Ewen-

Campan strongly supported the policy and asked if there was a distinction between plastic cutlery includes compostable cutlery. Mr. Sellers-Garcia clarified that banning both is consistent with the straw and bag ordinances, as plastic does not disintegrate, even if deemed compostable. Those can be processed in commercial compostable, high-heat, facilities, but in the City's waste stream, it is treated like all other plastic.

Councilor White suggested streamlining the language to be consistent between the use of cutlery and utensils. Mr. Shapiro suggested an effective date one year from the date of passage.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Native Species Ordinance

203365: That the City Solicitor draft an ordinance requiring native tree and plantings for all open space, to meet the goals of sustainability and biodiversity.

Chair Ballantyne sponsored Tori Antonino, a community advocate who has worked on this ordinance, to speak. Ms. Antonino shared that there has been work on this for over three years and the original draft was submitted about a year and a half ago, with the goal of 100% native trees. Advocates have worked with the Committee and the City to align goals and determine what is possible, and to allow room in the ordinance for growth in the future. The current agreement is 100% native plants for: the bike path, green line corridor, riparian areas (wetland), and bioswales. Ms. Antonino elaborated that moths and butterflies can only subsist on native plants, and other wildlife need those creatures to support the ecosystem. The premise is to restore the ecosystem to impact the affects of the climate crisis.

Chair Ballantyne noted that this ordinance would apply to City-owned lands. She added that this ordinance would also be the first of its kind in the country and the City worked to ensure that it was feasible with our natural conditions. Ms. Racaniello shared the administration's notes and changes, beginning with the possibility of updating the definition of native plants to include those that are not treated with systemic pesticides/neonicotinoids. There is concern from City staff that it may be difficult to ascertain this. Ms. Oliveira reinforced that the nursery industry has not prohibited these, so it is difficult to source plants that have specifically not been treated. Dr. Boukili confirmed that these are not used in the City, noting that the effects last for 1-2 years and would not be reinvigorated if they had been used initially. Chair Ballantyne asked if there were any nurseries that embraced the elimination of pesticides that the City could support, but Ms. Oliveira noted that there may be some small nurseries that are not local, but the industry generally is reacting to the EPA's decision on what to ban and these pesticides have not been banned. Ms. Antonino emphasized that the City should try to support these small businesses, to the extent possible, as it may help to affect the industry and steer it in the right direction. Councilor Scott added that an approach could be to include language in the ordinance with a provision that could expire, to require sourcing of only neonicotinoid-free plants in the future and give suppliers time to prepare. Ms. Oliveira expressed concern that if proof could not be provided and plants were not available, the City may be left without plants. Councilor White suggested that language that the City use its best efforts to procure plants free of this pesticide, based on what is available, would be sufficient. Councilor Scott emphasized that a concrete date could be useful for statewide lobbying efforts and to encourage other cities and towns to follow Somerville's lead.

Chair Ballantyne shared that the second item for consideration is to indicate a reliable source for a listing of invasive plants. Ms. Racaniello noted that the City has not yet found a specific comprehensive source. Dr. Boukili added that many of the previously shared sources are too broad, and do not take urban environments into consideration. Ms. Antonino elaborated that the reason to look beyond Massachusetts is that plants from beyond this area may be planted, and we should be referencing the mid-Atlantic states in anticipation of climate change shifting the climate more toward that region. Ms. Oliveira noted that

having multiple lists causes confusion for the staff and one local list would streamline the process for the department.

Ms. Racaniello updated the Committee that the definitions for streetscapes and City-owned property are still underway, in collaboration with the Solicitor's Office. The Reporting Requirements (Section 7) are also being worked on by City staff, to include not only Public Space and Urban Forestry but also Public Works and Infrastructure and Asset Management.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206495: That the City Solicitor consider the attached language in the drafting of a Native Tree and Plantings Ordinance, as ordered by #203365.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205683: Tori Antonino submitting comments re: #203365, calling for a native planting ordinance.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207999: 3 residents submitting comments re: #206495, the proposed native plant ordinance.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208567: Elizabeth Lundgren submitting comments re: #206495, the proposed native plant ordinance.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Sustainability

207373: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment develop an electric vehicle charging infrastructure program.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia shared that the City has an EV charging program, and there are changes planned for the FY22 budget regarding EV charging, as there is a lot of change in the industry. The City has to accelerate the deployment of EV charging stations to meet the City and State transportation goals. Priorities for deployment are to focus on Level 2 charging, which is charging that happens where cars are parked, but not to the exclusion of slower charging that happens at home. There will be a focus on renters and vehicles that do not have parking spots. The goal is for EV charging to complement other mobility goals, such as transit. The policies are not to incentivize more vehicles, just that of the vehicles, electric is preferred.

Councilor Mbah asked if there was grant funding available to support these programs, and if there is data on the location of charging stations. Mr. Sellers-Garcia clarified that all of the charging stations are supported by state grant programs, and the City will continue to pursue those, but they are not sufficient to achieve the scale of what the City needs to do. Private providers will need to do much of this, similar to how gasoline sales are not by the City. Equitable access is a priority for the City. Councilor Ewen-Campen shared a concern about handicapped accessibility at charging stations and Mr. Sellers-Garcia noted that accessibility is required by the state grants. The City will continue the

practice of finding the right dimensions and working with the Parking Commission, and if the City can do it in the public realm, a garage should not have an issue.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208042: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment inform this Council about New York City's "Climate Mobilization Act," which includes dramatic emission reductions for tall buildings, and explain which aspects could be adapted here.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia shared that this was from 2019 and the biggest impact was probably on buildings, with stepped limits over time and by building size for greenhouse gas emissions reductions. This differs from an energy usage target, and is more encompassing of the carbon footprint for operating a building. The primary enforcement mechanism is very steep fines, that are designed to be more expensive than the required retrofits. A PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) program has already been adopted in Somerville, and the City is also constrained by the state building code.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209614: That the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change discuss its 2020 plan with this Council's Committee on Open Space, Energy and Environment.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia is the staff person representing the Commission on Energy Use and Climate Change (CEUCC), and shared that they began meeting virtually, elected Larry Yu as chair, and have been studying climate change intersection topics. The three topics selected for further investigation are: energy use in empty buildings; a scan of shovel-ready projects for federal stimulus funds; and carbon pricing in the current economic crisis.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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211242: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment provide this Council with updates to the Climate Forward Plan.

Ms. Payne shared that the pandemic shifted some priorities, and although some work slowed, some projects saw more momentum. Accomplishment highlights included: new housing units in the development pipeline that meet the definition of the net-zero standard and passive-house certified; solutions to provide EV charging options to renters; site plan permit rules and regulations to update stormwater management policies and develop design guidelines to manage flood risks; an initiative called "Keep Cool Somerville" to create a heat health strategy toolkit and build heat resilience; and advocacy at the state level for changes to the energy code and to encourage adoption of a net-zero stretch code for municipalities.

Chair Ballantyne asked about the community focus areas for the heat resilience work and Ms. Payne elaborated that housing conditions had a more profound impact than the geographic locations. Some priority populations are older adults, people with mobility challenges, people with health conditions such as asthma, and families with young children. Chair Ballantyne also asked about the passive-house projects and Ms. Payne noted that they are all residential as the density bonus applies to residential properties, and they are multi-family in a wide range of sizes.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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OSPCD

210135: That the Director of SPCD and a representative from the MBTA discuss with the Committee on Open Space, Environment and Energy, the plan to recapture the trees and green space lost after the decimation of the GLX forested corridor.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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204968: That the Director of SPCD provide this Board with a list of all city owned parcels, indicating any brownfields, and any plans to remediate those sites and use them for housing.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209655: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Inspectional Services report to this Council how they plan to monitor and enforce green roof, tree planting and other green zoning requirements that require watering and maintenance, beyond issuing certificates of occupancy.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Creating Fields - Inner Belt

205709: That the Administration immediately pursue creation of a public fields and recreation area in the Inner Belt District pursuant to the Fields Master Plan.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210916: Director of SPCD responding to #205709 re: public fields in the Inner Belt District.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Housekeeping

207167: That the Director of SPCD share biannual CIP progress reports for all new open space and parks projects.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208232: That the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Commissioner of Public Works explore starting a monthly volunteer trash pickup day for the Dilboy DCR and Alewife Brook areas.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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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:	WORK COMPLETED
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209612: That the Director of Parks and Recreation work with the Superintendent of Schools to develop a policy for "utilizing artificial turf in the heat" similar to the policy used by Burlington, MA.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209613: That the Director of Sustainability and Environment, the Director of SPCD, The Director of Communications, and the Commissioner of Public Works develop a plan for a "Resiliency Hub" when extreme weather events occur.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209775: Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry responding to #207167 re: updated Capital Investment Plan progress reports for parks and open space projects.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209781: Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management responding to #s 209656, 209641, 209546, 209348 & 209174 re: flooding in various locations.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209840: Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry responding to #209444 re: the field at Lincoln Park.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Referenced Materials:

- 2020flatware (with 207884)
- Native Species Working Draft 2.17 (with 206495)