



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 30, 2026

6:30 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Mbah at 6:32 p.m. and adjourned at 7:31 p.m. on a Roll Call Vote: 5 in favor (Councilors McLaughlin, Hardt, Link, Ewen-Campen, Mbah), 0 opposed, 0 absent.

Councilor Link joined the meeting at 6:47 p.m.

Others present:

Shumeane Benford – Police Chief; Amanda Nagim-Williams – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs; Kimberly Wells – City Clerk; Michael Potere – Assistant City Clerk - Vital Records and Licensing.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Two City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Emily Hardt, City Councilor At Large Jon Link, Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [26-0261](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee Meeting of February 2, 2026.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Ward Two City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Mbah

2. Mayor's Request
(ID # [26-0322](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Ashley Catatao to the position of Police Sergeant.

Chief Shumeane Benford introduced the candidate, Ashley Catatao, and stated they have 15 years of experience working with the Police Department and is currently a Detective in the Special Investigations Unit. Chief Benford added that the candidate has bachelor's degree and several master's degrees and is a passionate advocate for mental health counseling.

Chair Mbah asked how their work as a sergeant would build trust with historically marginalized communities, who replied that they have a deep connection to the community and is from an immigrant family and that they know what it's like to grow up here in Somerville. The candidate added that they are dedicated to the community and to treating people as fairly as they would their own family.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked what philosophy they are bringing to this new degree of supervisory responsibility, who replied that they want to be a part helping to make the Police Department the best it can be, and that this provides them with a louder voice and a chance to become more involved.

Chair Mbah moved to enter executive session at 6:55 p.m. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors McLaughlin, Hardt, Link, Ewen-Campen, Mbah), 0 opposed, 0 absent. The Committee returned from executive session at 7:02 p.m. No votes were taken in executive session except the vote to adjourn.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Two City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Mbah

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0321](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Courtney Reece to the position of Police Sergeant.

Chief Shumeane Benford introduced the candidate, Courtney Reece, and stated they have 11 years of experience with the Police Department, is currently assigned as a Detective in the Criminal Investigations Division investigating property crime, has a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in criminal justice, and has served as a beacon of encouragement in the Department.

Chair Mbah asked how the candidate would foster a culture of continuous learning, accountability, and professionalism within their unit, who replied that they would lead by example. The candidate added that they strongly believe in community policing, and encouraging other officers to get out of their patrol vehicles and walk around neighborhoods to meet residents and become familiar faces. The candidate also stated they believe in the importance of training courses, and that they will encourage other officers to take as many as they can to continue developing their skills and knowledge. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked if the candidate if they have any concerns about entering this role, who replied that they believe that policing is changing and that it is important for the Department to change with the times, and that lessons from the present day and specifically in Somerville will be important in shaping new officers. Councilor McLaughlin expressed support for this candidate.

Chair Mbah moved to enter executive session at 6:55 p.m. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors McLaughlin, Hardt, Link, Ewen-Campen, Mbah), 0 opposed, 0 absent. The Committee returned from executive session at 7:02 p.m. No votes were taken in executive

session except the vote to adjourn.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Two City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Mbah

4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [26-0024](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of James Plotkin as Municipal Hearing Officer.

City Clerk Kimberly Wells introduced James Plotkin, the candidate, and explained to the Committee that this position handles noncriminal tickets issued for trash violations or snow removal violations. The candidate stated that they have been a hearing officer in some capacity since 2001, and that they have an appreciation that some people who are coming to appeal tickets, as they can be nervous, and it is important to treat everyone fairly and with respect. Chair Mbah asked how the candidate would approach making decisions with impartiality and consistency, and in dealing with conflicting accounts, who replied that the conflicting account is the ticket itself, and that they will treat the code and the person with equal respect.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked the candidate to speak to how they approach people who might be angry, who replied that they have pastoral training in the past and have been taught to mirror language. The candidate continued that often when people are angry, they want to have a chance to be heard, and if you give them that chance, they will feel better, even if the result does not go the way they want. The candidate added that the people in the hearings are not represented by an attorney and sometimes there is a language barrier, and that they have experience working with people in both of those types of situations.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Two City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Mbah

5. Order
(ID # [26-0340](#))

By Councilor Davis

That this City Council appoints Jessica Smith to the Public Financing of Campaigns Committee.

Chair Mbah asked the candidate, Jessica Smith, how they would ensure transparency and accountability with public campaign funds, who replied that they have worked for several campaigns for current city councilors, and that funds should be available for applicants who may have barriers in the way for running for office. The candidate added that they view their role as investigating what could be done with public money and further commented

that whether the transparency requirements should be stricter in the city than are required by state law is a question worthy of being explored. Councilor Ewen-Campen expressed support for the candidate.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Two City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Link

6. Order
(ID # [26-0341](#))

By Councilor Davis

That this City Council appoints James Leo Bedard to the Ranked Choice Voting Committee.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Two City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Mbah

7. Order
(ID # [26-0342](#))

By Councilor Davis

That this City Council appoints Crystal Huff to the Ranked Choice Voting Committee.

City Clerk Wells introduced the candidate, Crystal Huff, and explained that this position is for a new committee that was formed out of the recent city charter, and that this appointment is the first step in working with the City Council and Mayor to determine how to implement ranked choice voting in the city. Clerk Wells continued that the candidate is a regular attendee of City Council meetings, is deeply invested in Somerville's government, and has recently engaged in the academic study of ranked choice voting, which aligns very closely with the work they will be doing in this role. The candidate added that they have studied co-governance, co-democracy, and group decision making, including ranked choice voting, and that they are eager to apply this knowledge to the role. Councilor McLaughlin expressed support for the candidate, as well as for ranked choice voting for Ward City Councilors. Councilor Link expressed support for the candidate.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Ward Two City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Mbah