



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Public Health and Public Safety Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 30, 2025

6:30 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair McLaughlin at 6:34 pm and adjourned at 7:32 pm on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Scott, Clingan, McLaughlin), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Others present: Council President - Lance Davis, Nikki Spencer - Chief of Staff, Michael Potere - Licensing Operations Manager, Andi Benvenuto - Community Health Worker Manager. Kimberley Hutter - Legislative Liaison, Rachel Nadkarni - Director of Economic Development, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

Roll Call

Present: Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan and Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

1. Committee Minutes
- Approval of the Minutes of the Public Health and Public Safety Committee Meeting of June 9, 2025.

(ID # [25-1109](#))

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

2. Resolution
- By Councilor Davis and Councilor Strezo
- That the Administration provide data on needles found in and around Davis Square, outside of the designated receptacle box, including a breakdown by specific location, and used vs. unused.

(ID # [25-1563](#))

This item was taken up with item #'s 25-1562, 25-1561, and 25-1353. Chief of Staff Spencer was present to speak on item #25-1562 on creating more spaces for residents to store belongings. Lockers are available on a short-term basis, and bins have been made available by the Department of Public Works, they are unsupervised and require coordination and outreach to return the items to the owner. Short-term solutions have been explored; longer-term solutions have included looking at other models where unhoused people have regular access to lockers but those are work intensive. They often require to be contracted out and need to find the staff, the space, and the facilities. Policies on unclaimed properties and belonging and what happens when someone does not return their belongings are also things to consider in the long term. Chair McLaughlin sponsored the Ward Councilor, Councilor Davis, to speak. Councilor Davis expressed his goal for this item was a way for residents, housed and unhoused, to live better alongside each

other, in the same space.

Councilor Davis spoke to the process for removing abandoned items from public spaces and asked the administration what the process is for removing personal belongings. Chief of Staff Spencer responded that administration and the Health and Human Services Department, along with various other departments, are continuously looking at best practices throughout the country on unattended personal items. She outlined the process now is if there is a complaint or someone finds unattended items, staff work to determine if the items represent a safety hazard, and if so, that is removed right away. Other considerations include does the item(s) block egress, are they located in a sensitive environment such as schools, playgrounds, or construction sites. Belongings that can be stored are kept and then the process begins to identify the owner or if it was truly abandoned begins. There are continuous conversations with all departments involved on the protocol and training employees to handle the items appropriately and safely. Chair McLaughlin spoke to the church in Davis Square and its potential use to store belongings. Councilor Davis reminded the committee it had been used for storage in the past and the Davis Square committee is looking into potentially utilizing it again, but it is not a long-term solution.

Community Health Manager Benvenuto spoke on item #25-1353. She presented that the team has taken part in 150 client encounters in the last month. Encounters include working with individuals on SNAP benefits, referrals, the handout of supplies, and more. The current outreach schedule is a minimum of three days a week, two of the days are in Davis Square and surrounding areas as well as in East Somerville. A flex day is on Mondays for the team to respond to any reports that come in on Fridays. The schedule is informed by other outreach efforts being made in the city, reports from city leadership about unhoused activity in a certain location, and a partnership with 311 to receive QAlerts directly and the team responds accordingly. Outside of outreach the team has established trust in the community amongst the unhoused. Manager Benvenuto spoke directly to the need for sharp pick-ups and the team hands out personal sharp proposals and a sticker initiative to show where the kiosk is and other ways to safely dispose of sharps. Councilor Scott asked how supplies are purchased. Manager Benvenuto responded Opioid Settlement Funds and a supplies line.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

3. Resolution
(ID # [25-1562](#))

By Councilor Davis and Councilor Strezo
That the Administration discuss with this Council whether there is a need to create additional alternative locations for people to store their belongings.

This item was taken up with item #25-1563.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Resolution
(ID # [25-1561](#))

By Councilor Davis, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson
That the Administration discuss with this Council the process for removing abandoned items from public spaces.

This item was taken up with item #25-1563.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Resolution
(ID # [25-1353](#))

By Councilor Strezo and Councilor Davis
That the Administration direct all relevant departments, including Health and Human Services, to appear before this City Council to discuss and update on current unhoused outreach efforts.

This item was taken up with item #25-1563.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Order
(ID # [25-1340](#))

By Councilor Strezo, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Clingan and Councilor Burnley Jr.

That the Director of Emergency Management and Mayor inform City Councilors in real time when emergency events are occurring in the city, such as fires or emergency evacuations.

Liaison Hutter stated the procedure currently is when the Intergovernmental Affairs Team is notified, they work to let the Ward Councilor know. There have been requests to keep the At-Large Councilors in the loop at the same time and Liaison Hutter explained they are working on how to streamline that process. Chair McLaughlin did acknowledge that it is difficult for someone during an emergency to step away and call 5 extra members of the community and information is often found online faster.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

7. Order
(ID # [25-1180](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Davis, Councilor Mbah and Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Economic Development and City Clerk discuss with this Council policies regarding outdoor seating and how the city may make it easier and less expensive for small businesses.

Licensing Operations Manager Potere spoke to the standardized applications and instructions, adjustment to the renewal process to make it easier, and establish a better fee service as all things that have been done already to address outdoor dining. Manager Potere spoke to the submitted memo,

PHPS - 2025-10-30 Outdoor Dining Fees (with 25-1180), that outlines the proposed license fee and how staff reached the fees based for outdoor dining. Chair McLaughlin asked how much revenue is brought to the city from outdoor dining licenses. Manager Potere stated that in FY25 it is around \$150,000. Director Nadkarni spoke to the fees set up in the memo was an effort that was agreed upon with many departments, and the next evaluation is coming up in the next season. Director Nadkarni emphasized that the fee-based system is prioritizing the fact that the business is taking away public space, and paying for that utilization, over whether the space is taking away a meter. More specifically, the meter fees collected are less than what the business would pay for the license.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Order
(ID # [25-0923](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Inspectional Services appear before this Council to discuss recent changes to business permitting in relation to "risk categorization" and the impact they may have on businesses.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

9. Order
(ID # [25-0087](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Health and Human Services, Director of Housing, and Director of Housing Stability update this City Council regularly on progress towards addressing homelessness.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

10. Order
(ID # [25-0064](#))

By Councilor Wilson, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Clingan and Councilor Mbah

That the Chief Fire Engineer and the Commissioner of Public Works discuss with this Council how to ensure Fire Department facilities are well maintained.

Liaison Hutter stated the memo shared by staff was sent to the committee prior and attached as a handout, *PHPS - 2025-10-30 SFD Facilities 10.30.25(with 25-0064)*. Councilor Scott asked about the turnaround on the requests for repairs. Liaison Hutter said there is a record for 311 tickets and the duration they have been opened, and she can bring that back to the Council.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- PHPS - 2025-10-30 Outdoor Dining Fees (with 25-1180)
- PHPS - 2025-10-30 SFD Facilities 10.30.25(with 25-0064)
- PHPS - 2025-10-30 Addressing Homelessness (with 25-0087)
- PHPS - 2025-10-30 Davis Sq sharps memo 10.29.25 (with 25-1563)
- PHPS - 2025-10-30 Davis Sq Sharps Pick Up Report 10.16.25 (with 25-1563)
- PHPS - 2025-10-30 Davis Square Hypodermic Needle Recovery SFD 10.30.25 (with 25-1563)