



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 8, 2020

REPORT OF THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Lance L. Davis	Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Vice Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:03pm and adjourned at 7:06pm.

Others present: Annie Connor - Mayor's Office; Doug Kress - HHS; Brianna Noonan - SomerStat; Omar Boukili - Incident Commander

Approval of the May 18, 2020 Minutes

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

Approval of the May 26, 2020 Minutes

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

209798: That the Director of Health and Human Services appear before this Council with an update on measures to reduce the spread of the coronavirus and to support anyone who may become infected.

Ms. Noonan began by presenting the weekly situation update. The new key date since the previous meeting is June 3, when Somerville declared racism a public health and safety emergency and outlined initiatives to address the issue.

Global trends show that the speed of increase is growing, with an increase of 28% since last week, where the previous weekly increase was only 14%. The trends in the United States are more stable. Massachusetts is now 5th in the country based on number of cases, and 3rd based on case rate by population. All of the MDPH data trends on the dashboard show positive or in progress trends. Importantly, the dashboard now includes data on testing, which is steadily increasing.

Somerville is slightly below the state total in cases per population. As of June 3, Somerville had 10,294 tests per 100,000 residents. Also as of June 3, 11.2% of the Somerville residents who were tested for COVID-19 had positive test results, which is down from 12.7% on May 27.

As of Monday, June 8 at 9:15am: 926 residents tested positive; 665 recovered; 29 fatalities; 261 active cases (total cases less those recovered).

Somerville Public Schools delivered 4,537 meals during the week of June 1 through June 5. Last week's demand was on par with prior weeks. The Emergency Food Pantry served 545 households (approximately 2,028 individuals), with a continuing trend of fewer new referrals. As of June 1, the total masks distributed to departments is 51,306.

The Police Department data show that over the past two weeks, crime-related calls for service were 48% higher than the previous two week period. This increase is attributable to property crime. The calls for service decreased in the past month primarily due to fewer directed patrols. As COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and property crime increases, patrol deployment strategy shifts. In the Fire Department, last week saw 7 COVID-19 related medical calls, which is 4 fewer than the prior week. Additionally, there were a total of 295 COVID-19 related medical calls as of June 7. Last week had an average of 1.1 COVID-19 related calls per day.

Mr. Kress reported that community testing continues successfully, particularly in shelters, where the city continues to keep positive cases down. The phasing in Somerville is also being addressed in a more community-specific way, which includes a variety of industry-specific meetings to focus on best practices for re-opening. Mr. Kress noted that there will be times when guidance is modified, and the city will continue to monitor state and other guidelines.

Councilor Rossetti asked if any public safety personnel had been confirmed as positive cases and Mr. Kress confirmed that there has been no confirmation of changes to previous numbers. Councilor Rossetti also asked how many applications had been received to extend the seating area of restaurants into the street or sidewalk. Mr. Boukili announced that application intake will begin tomorrow. The first group of business owners will be those with already approved outdoor seating, but will be re-applied for based on the new COVID-19 guidelines. These applications will be submitted to the Licensing Commission. The second phase of applications, those taking a portion of a public right of way, will be a more complex process due to the safety issues. Councilor Rossetti asked if mask assistance was offered to the schools, and Mr. Boukili noted that this is in the planning stages, and there will be masks provided, though it remains unclear where the funding will be specifically drawn from.

Councilor Strezo asked if there were any updates on antibody testing and Mr. Kress shared that the testing is not quite ready, but the department is continuing to move it forward as fast as possible. Councilor Ballantyne asked about getting over-the-counter medicine (allergy, ibuprofen etc.) to residents with financial challenges and Mr. Kress noted that this has not yet been provided, and there have not been many requests, but it could be explored if needed. Direction from a primary care provider would be useful in a case like this, as the city would not want to distribute medication that could cause allergic reactions or adverse effects.

Councilor Scott asked if there had been progress made with getting public safety personnel tested and Mr. Kress elaborated that it remains an open option and is promoted by the department. Councilor Scott asked if the mobile site has been spending time in the 02145 zip code, and it is planned for that area on Thursday and Friday of this week. Councilor Scott asked as well whether guidelines had been released for

restaurants, and Mr. Boukili shared that there is a working group of 26 restaurant owners addressing the issue, with guidelines just issued, which can be found at the following website: <https://www.somervillema.gov/restaurantreopening>. Councilor White, as Chair of the Licenses and Permits Committee, summarized that a permit must be issued for any outdoor seating. The administration wants to streamline this process, and has presented an order that would transfer this authority to the Licensing Commission, to allow for a faster processing time than would waiting for the scheduled City Council meetings. This transfer of responsibilities would last through November, or until the expiration of the state of emergency. No new applications can be received by the Licensing Commission until this order is approved by the City Council.

Councilor Scott asked whether the administration was prepared to reverse course on opening if cases spiked, and what thresholds were established to determine this. Mr. Boukili confirmed that community based testing numbers, state testing numbers, and any hospital data indicating spikes in admissions will all be tracked and considered. It is notable, however, that the reaction is generally 5-14 days behind the transmission.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked if the city had made plans to open public spaces for recreation, and if libraries would be allowing curbside pickup. Mr. Boukili announced that library pickup news will be announced soon. The active use of parks will depend on operational ability to sanitize and to control capacity, as well as to trace any outbreaks that may be connected to outdoor spaces. Once this ability is confirmed, the opening of these facilities will be announced. Councilor Clingan confirmed that this process is being addressed by asset, which means that all parks may not open at the same time, and some features may also be available at different intervals. Councilor Strezio inquired whether splash pads were even under consideration and Mr. Boukili confirmed that they were not completely discounted, particularly noting their utility in hot weather, but contact must be managed and it will be studied further before action is taken. Councilor Mbah asked if there was information about daycare facilities, and Mr. Boukili noted that they are licensed by the state, and are closed through June 29. It is up to the state to release guidelines and regulations before they can re-open.

Chair Davis reiterated that finding space for businesses, both restaurant and retail, is an important priority. Mr. Boukili added that there will be a period for testing and determining where capacity is most needed, and all ideas will be considered to find ways to support the city's businesses.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Handouts:

- 200608 Situation Summary for City Council (with 209798)
- sharedstreetsupdate_6_8_20 (with 209798)