



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

March 25, 2019

REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	Vice Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Councilor Niedergang, George Proakis - OSPCD, Ellen Shachter - OSPCD, Hannah Carillo - OSPCD, Michael Feloney - OSPCD, Tom Galligani - OSPCD, Frank Wright - Law, Rich Raiche - Engineering, Stan Koty - DPW, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:34 PM by Chairman Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 8:42 PM.

**Approval of the February 6, 2019 Minutes**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>ACCEPTED</b>
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**HEALEY**

**207160: That the Administration prioritize the redevelopment of the Healey Schoolyard Tot Lot as soon as the 2019 school year.**

Ms. Connor shared some updates from Mr. Rawson, including that the funding for the Healey project was authorized and Purchasing is scheduled to advertise to bidders this week. This funding was for additional design. The phasing will prioritize the Tot Lot over the other parts of the Healey design. Councilor Clingan noted that the Tot Lot will be part of the greater overall design. The soccer field will also be included in the design. Mr. Proakis added that the timeline for the design scope will generally take several weeks, and then teams will have 2-6 weeks to respond, and then staff will take a few weeks to interview finalists.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**207164: That the Director of SPCD work with the Housing Authority to enable wheelchair access from the Mystic View apartments to the Healey School.**

Mr. Proakis commented that he is uncertain if this is already included in the design process and will check the scope to clarify. Councilor Clingan wondered if the state could assist with some funding for this, or whether we could appeal to the Federal government. Mr. Proakis noted that it is worth pursuing whatever funding assistance is available, and will research further once there is a better understanding of the magnitude of the project.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**206820: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on the Healy schoolyard redesign and consider making it a top priority.**

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

### **DAVIS SQUARE IMPROVEMENTS**

**207489: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 6 Councilor on near-term plans for overdue maintenance in Davis Square and longer-term plans for major infrastructure and public realm improvements. (Also see #206665)**

Mr. Proakis shared that the community process suggested that getting a number of things done in the short-term is a priority, but weighing the improvements that can be accomplished that will not be undone by major infrastructure investments in the longer-term is important. This includes addressing brick issues, traffic signals, poles, signs, and concerns around the park. They hope to complete as many as possible between now and November. Councilor Hirsch noted that complaints about the bricks are common. Mr. Raiche noted that DPW has been unsuccessful trying to repair the bricks in the past. The quote for spot repairs that the group Davis Now solicited and shared was quite high and not a viable overall option. Concept planning and design will likely take a year each; it will be 3-4 years before any heavy infrastructure improvements take place, so the current focus is safety improvements. What can be done will be addressed on a block by block basis - including possibly patching, concrete, or whatever is needed for repairs. Chairman Ewen-Campen confirmed that the goal is a late summer bid and fall construction. Mr. Proakis added that some of the painting and pole straightening can occur even before then.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

**203479: That the Administration update the Ward 6 Alderman on plans to improve way-finding for the Community Path through Davis Square.**

Chairman Ewen-Campen noted that this concern is timely due to the coming warmer weather and bridge detours, which will have more people traveling through Davis Square. Mr. Proakis noted that the infrastructure team will be out in Davis Square in the upcoming days to determine what items can be addressed. Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that the sooner the better, for at least some basic way-finding measures.

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

### **OFFICE OF HOUSING STABILITY**

**206227: That the Administration fund a full-time legal services position to provide free on-site legal assistance to anyone seeking it at Somerville's District Housing Court.**

Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that almost no tenants have legal representation, while almost all landlords do. A small piece of this was funded in the supplemental budget for this fiscal year. Deputy Director Berman is working with Ms. Schacter on an RFP, and it will likely be 2-3 months before any services are provided. Ms. Schacter noted that the same-day services model is not as effective as full representation, when attorneys are able to meet with their clients before court, and she is in favor of the latter model. OHS would be a funnel for referrals and would also do on-site intake. Further, there would be some screening for merit, to determine the cases where an attorney could make a significant impact.

Councilor Clingan confirmed that the services would be available to Somerville residents, though the court proceedings may take place elsewhere. Ms. Schacter also added that if a case was determined to not be a good fit for legal services, OHS would still assist and offer advice. Mr. Proakis further added that there will be an open RFP process to determine who is able to provide these services. One of the benefits of this is that the work can flex with the needs at various times. Councilor Clingan wondered what the case load is. Ms. Schacter shared that there are approximately 400 cases per year, but this only counts cases that make it to the court stage, and there are also many others that are resolved prior. The payment would be something that is refined through the contract process. OHS will also be putting out an RFP for housing search and stability services, which should help further address tenants' issues and needs.

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**207504: That the Director of Housing Stability provide an update on the recommendations of the Sustainable Neighborhoods Working Group, including a report sent to Working Group members.**

Councilor Hirsch noted generally that it is useful to circle back with task force groups to report on what was accomplished and what items are still planning to be addressed. Mr. Proakis added that there were 18 proposals that were generated from the SNWG and Ms. Carrillo has been tracking the progress, which is significant. Councilor Hirsch wondered what the next opportunity should be to set further aspirational goals. The SomerVision 2040 Committee will likely be the next to reflect significant updates. Chairman Ewen-Campen asked that the document tracking progress be shared for both a future committee meeting and also to be shared with the public. Mr. Proakis and Ms. Schacter recommended that the next step be to prepare an update and invite the members of the Working Group to the meeting to participate.

Mr. Proakis shared the overview of the progress made from the Working Group's recommendations including: a real estate transfer fee, which is pending home rule petition approval from the legislature; updating the linkage fees; updating the condominium conversion ordinance, which is recommended for action by the City Council on Thursday; participating in a 100 homes initiative, of which 50 units acquired and preserved to-date; and creating a short-term rental policy, which has a draft ordinance in the Legislative Matters Committee. Additionally, other pieces - including the density bonus, accessory structures, cash-in-lieu payments, and universal wait list - are part of the zoning overhaul.

Councilors Hirsch and Clingan asked for the communication to be maintained, specifically around what the affordable housing priorities are and what needs to be done to encourage state legislation.

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**PARKS & PUBLIC SPACES**

**207568: That the Commissioner of Public Works establish a regular monthly cleaning schedule for the sidewalks abutting the Nunziato Dog Park.**

Commissioner Koty noted that they are working on a plan to address this issue for the entire city, including the bike paths. Chairman Ewen-Campen noted that it was a particular issue when combined

with the snow. All of the equipment and resources will be allocated; there are currently three sidewalk sweepers available. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked when the policy would be ready, and Mr. Koty noted that it would be some time next week.

Councilor Clingan asked whether business owners are sweeping the sidewalks and Mr. Koty noted that the DPW is no longer responsible for the enforcement, that falls under ISD, but he believes the businesses generally just receive friendly reminders. Councilor Clingan also confirmed that all of the equipment is drive-able, and not manual.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**207492: That the Director of the Arts Council and the Commissioner of Public Works work together to develop and put up a mural to replace the panel missing from the fence in the playground at Lexington Park.**

Mr. Koty confirmed that the DPW will provide the necessary resources for this. Councilor Niedergang added that the planning process is underway.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**207493: That the Director of the Arts Council and the Commissioner of Public Works work together to install a mural on the walls under the Lowell Street bridge on the Community Path, to create beauty and deter graffiti.**

Mr. Koty shared that Director Jenkins is planning a mural program for the month of August, and the DPW will be providing funds and equipment. Councilor Hirsch suggested that the back of the Argenziano School might be a good location for this mural program as well. Mr. Koty noted that this would involve special training in train safety. Councilor Niedergang added that there is still a lot of planning, but he is confident about how this project is underway.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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### **LIQUOR LICENSES AND SMALL BUSINESSES**

**207712: That the Director of SPCD present to the Council a list of City-owned alcohol licenses issued to determine the program's impact on small businesses.**

Mr. Galligani shared that there are currently a number of liquor licenses available, unlike with marijuana, where the licenses are difficult to obtain. The liquor licenses are allocated per neighborhoods corresponding to SomerVision maps. There are 33 new licenses that can be issued this year. A rough estimate is that approximately half of the licenses are issued to small, independent businesses, but Mr. Galligani would like to explore the data further. Keeping the license fees reasonable has also been an important part of the process. Many of the smaller startups have requested beer and wine only licenses, as there are fewer requirements and lower insurance fees.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**205376: That the City Solicitor prepare an opinion on whether the city may prioritize minority owned businesses in city contracts.**

Chairman Ewen-Campen shared the Boston ordinance as an example. Solicitor Wright shared the state statute under procurement law, which requires first determining that there is a history of discrimination, and the discrimination must be specific to the governmental unit, not society as a whole. Mr. Wright noted that it is his understanding the Boston has faced challenges implementing its ordinance as a result. The city could pursue other options, such as advertising to a more universal audience. Chairman Ewen-Campen asked for clarification on whether this factor could be considered when reviewing bids, but Mr. Wright suggested the focus would be better on neighborhoods and specific goals, rather than as a general citywide policy. RFPs cannot be targeted to a particular vendor or contractor, but can be generally structured to allow for a wide audience to have an opportunity to respond.

Chairman Ewen-Campen moved that "*the Director of Purchasing attend a meeting of the Housing and Community Development Committee to inform the Committee on the procurement process and the types of contracts that the City enters into*".

The motion passed on a voice vote.

Mr. Galligani shared a flier for vendor workshops aimed at connecting local minority-owned businesses to potential opportunities at the state. Chairman Ewen-Campen asked how events such as this are advertised and there is direct outreach from OSPCD staff as well as partnerships with Communications and local officials to get the word out. Ms. Connor added that getting these suppliers onto a bid list could help Somerville accomplish its goal of working with more minority-owned businesses as well.

Chairman Ewen-Campen moved "*that the Director of Purchasing report to this committee the percentage of state-certified minority, women, veteran, and/or disadvantaged business enterprises that have contracts with the City of Somerville*".

The motion passed on a voice vote.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**205377: That the City Solicitor prepare an opinion on whether liquor licenses may be granted preferentially to woman and minority owned businesses.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**206614: Assistant City Solicitor responding to #205377 re: establishing preference for women and minority owned businesses in granting liquor licenses.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**Handouts:**

- City of Boston Info (with 205376)
- Law Dept. response (with 205376)
- Vendor Workshop Flyer (with 205376)