



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 15, 2022

REPORT OF THE RODENT ISSUES SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Charlotte Kelly	Chair	Present	
Kristen Strezo	Vice Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Nick Antanavica - ISD, Colin Zeigler - ISD, Hannah Carrillo - Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:31 PM by Chair Kelly and adjourned at 7:26 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors McLaughlin, Strezo and Kelly), 0 against and 0 absent.

Approval of the Minutes of May 17, 2021.

RESULT:

APPROVED

213072 - That the Director of Health and Human Services, the Director of Inspectional Services and the Environmental Health Coordinator update this Council on current rodent mitigation plans.:

Councilor Strezo asked if all of the city's rodent personnel would be taken out of the Health and Human Services (HHS) Department and Superintendent Antanavica responded that Coordinator Zeigler's position was the only one that was under HHS, adding that it's his belief that all rodent issues will be handled by ISD, although he can't be absolutely sure of that.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

212833 - That the Director of Inspectional Services and the Director of Health and Human Services report on progress regarding planned internal rodent control meetings and regular joint departmental meetings.:

Superintendent Antanavica and Coordinator Zeigler informed the committee that these meetings have been beneficial and will resume as soon as possible.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE****212979 - That the Director of Health and Human Services provide an update on the possibility of using Community Development Block Grant funding to combat the rodent infestation in East Somerville.:**

Liaison Carrillo reported that she discussed this issue with OSPCD staff. The consensus was that it's a bit of a stretch to use CDBG funds for this purpose. Additionally, the grant would have to be requested by a local area non-profit, thus putting it in competition with other areas where those funds are needed. Councilor McLaughlin expressed his pleasure that the city is attempting to allocate funds from other areas to help address the rodent problem. Chair Kelly commented that she is looking forward to having a discussion regarding the use of other funding sources.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED****213084 - Director of Inspectional Services requesting to appear before this Council to provide updates and discuss the SMART pilot, Residential Rodent Programs, and Community Outreach.:**

Environmental Health Coordinator Colin Zeigler gave a presentation and said that the rodent calls to 311 have been tracked from 2018-2021. In order to address the problems earlier in the season, a postcard program to advise and enlist residents' assistance was implemented in March of 2021. This program resulted in 157 additional new calls for assistance with rodent control. Mr. Zeigler stated that the postcard program will continue in March of this year. From the data received, hot spots of rodent activity were , and a baiting map was created. There has been a spike in calls and rodent concentrations along the GLX path, which is to be expected as rodent activity increases in the areas of construction due to displacement.

Superintendent Antanavica reported that the data controlled SMART Pilot program is ready to launch. This system utilizes 24/7 passive infrared sensor technology to detect temperature, power, and water changes as well as movement and transmits gps data to the city. Devices may be located in the sewer system or above grade. Somerville is currently installing above grade smart boxes in areas of high rodent traffic along the GLX, residential neighborhoods, the bike path and parks

As data is compiled, areas can be fine-tuned to deal with the problem more effectively. Mr. Zeigler told the committee that 50 smart boxes are being deployed in the pilot areas of Davis Square, MacArthur Street, Lexington Avenue and Gilman Street. Residents will be advised of the testing in the areas through the use of press releases, flyers, social media, installation video, door hangers, on-site visits and postcards and the boxes would be labeled to inform the public of what they are.

Superintendent Antanavica spoke about staffing, saying that the Environmental Health Coordinator's position will be brought into ISD. Councilor McLaughlin asked if that position would be 100% focused rodents and Superintendent Antanavica replied that there are two other responsibilities associated with the position, but that most of the focus would be on rodents. Additionally, the mayor has requested that a dedicated Rodent Control Officer be assigned to ISD and that job description is currently being developed and will be before the City Council in the near future.

Councilor Strezo asked how this program will help neighborhoods and Superintendent Antanavica explained that the collected data will help to determine the travel actions of the rats. Mr. Zeigler noted that Norwegian rats have been known to travel up to a 100-foot radius. Chair Kelly asked about the pilot program's timeline and Superintendent Antanavica said that the above ground boxes will begin to be placed during the week of February 21st and that the pilot will run for 5 months and will have collected 3 months of data by the time the FY-23 budget sessions begin.

Chair Kelly asked what success would look like and Superintendent Antanavica replied that the city needs to know if the numbers line up, so success would be validation of the number of complaints received. The volume of rodent activity will be analyzed to quantify the problem to get it under control. Chair Kelly asked if there is interest in expanding the program beyond the pilot areas and Superintendent Antanavica said that, depending on the data, a larger discussion might be needed to determine other areas and additional funding. Chair Kelly inquired about mitigation for non-pilot areas and Mr. Zeigler said that the city will reach out to residents about rodent prevention and will continue to issue tickets for violations. Mr. Antanavica commented that the rodent budget allocation is finally going to be spent on rodent items.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Reference Material:

- RCC February Slides NJA, CZ Edits 2-14-22 (with 213084)
- SMART City Concept to Data (with 213084)