



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

October 2, 2019

REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Wilfred N. Mbah	Chair	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Vice Chair	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	City Councilor At Large	Absent	

Others present: Annie Connor, Jill Lathan, Luisa Oliveira and Tori Antonino

The meeting was held in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:30pm by Chairman Mbah and adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Approval of the May 1, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
----------------	-----------------

206770: That the Administration create a Task Force to develop a master plan for green and open spaces.

Items 2 through 4 were discussed together. Ms. Connor, Ms. Oliveira and Ms. Lathan distributed another copy of the master plan that had been previously distributed to the committee. Councilor Niedergang asked about the SomerVision goal and if it was true that the Administration is walking away from the goal due to not having enough land. Councilor Scott stated that open space has been a problem in the city for many years. Foss Park was created in late 1800's and is one of the largest open space areas in Somerville. There were discussions of concern that open space seems to be scaling back from the SomerVision goals. Ms. Oliveira stated the Task Force has had many discussions about privately owned public space options for the city. The Task Force has been working on guidelines, reviewing designs and studying San Francisco and New York who have these areas.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

207030: That the Administration provide updates on the timelines for the design and construction phases for CPA-funded open space projects that have been approved since the

program started.

Ms. Oliveira provided a list of areas acquired by the city over the last five years from CPA funds. Areas 5 Palmer and 35 Richardson were most recently acquired with CPA funds. There will be a community meeting on October 21st. Councilor Niedergang stated that linkage fees would help fund open space and inquired about Home Rule Petition to add linkage fee.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

207156: That the Director of SPCD provide an updated list of all open space projects in the queue, with anticipated cost, funding, and timeline to completion.

Ms. Oliveira provided an updated list at tonight's meeting.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

207167: That the Director of SPCD share biannual CIP progress reports for all new open space and parks projects.

Councilor Ballantyne requested a progress report like the one she had received from Mr. Proakis. Ms. Connor will work with Mr. Proakis to recreate the same report format. Councilor Ballantyne stated there are a lot parks in the queue and do not know the timeline and would like a report updating two times a year.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

205706: That the Administration report in writing on the net change in green and open space based on all projects planned for 2018.

It was stated that 19.9 acres of open space has been developed since 2010 and a document was provided with the breakdown of all spaces. It was also stated that 5 Palmer and 35 Richardson were recently acquired.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

207063: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on changes to and progress on the Fields Master Plan, including facilities controlled by DCR.

The Field Master Plan updated 10/2/19 was distributed at the meeting and had previously been sent to the committee last July 2019. Ms. Connor stated the Administration is working with DCR on Draw 7 for best use. There will be an announcement coming out soon. There were discussions about natural grass field will have to be restricted with number of hours of use. There were also discussions about creating turf field at the Healey School and natural grass at Dilboy Auxiliary. It was stated that Draw 7 is not an athletic field. Foss Park is DCR funded and there will be a community meeting, including non-English speaking population about the park and a memo from DCR about what to expect after DCR completes Foss renovation. It was also stated that Dilboy Stadium needs repairs and the Administration has been trying to renew the agreement with DCR for about a year. Also, ESCS and Capuano were renovated over the summer. Questions were also asked on how many hours were permitted for use on Lincoln Park.

It was stated that Somerville Youth Soccer plays there most days 5 -9:30 and the school has recess every day. With both groups using the Lincoln Park field, it is over its anticipated usage hours. Councilor Scott had been previously told that the field would be capped at 500 hours a week. Somerville Youth Soccer has reduced their hours this fall down to 140-150 hours a week due to access to Trum Field. They will also try to plan some games at Dilboy. Ms. Oliveira discussed the closing of Conway causing a lot displacement for activities.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

205369: That the Director of SPCD share with this Board the exact open space inventory, and clarify why there is a discrepancy between SomerVision's Open Space Plan and the State inventory of the city's open space.

It was stated that the open space inventory is in the Open Space Plan. There were discussions about discrepancies to what the state reports for open space. It was stated that not all land owned by the city has been dedicated.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

203387: That the Mayor update this Board on discussions with DCR about the fields at Draw 7 Park and Foss Park.

Questions were asked for the time line for Foss Park and when will the City of Somerville take ownership. Councilor Ballantyne requested an updated CIP report. Councilor Ballantyne has also spoken with the state delegation about the numbers for Foss and Dilboy. Councilor Ballantyne talked about the grass field at Dilboy Auxiliary is a flood zone area.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

206786: That the Administration update this Board on transferring the management of Foss Park to the City, to improve conditions and access.

The Administration is pushing to get a Memorandum of Understanding to manage the park. Ms. Oliveira stated that Foss Park is a regional facility and will be used by others outside of Somerville. Ms. Lathan stated that Foss would be managed the same way as Dilboy Stadium which is also a regional facility.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

207173: That the Administration provide to this Board by its January 10, 2019 meeting a response to the attached petition of Foss Park stakeholders, which requests a schematic community design process and a plan for financing and managing the facility.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

206824: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Parks and Recreation share a 5-year master design plan and financial investment plan for any DCR parks like Draw 7,

Foss, Dilboy, Blessing of the Bay, etc.

Councilor Ballantyne requested an updated CIP to be sent to the committee members.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

206231: That the Administration develop an open space acquisition plan to achieve the city's SomerVision goal of adding 125 acres of open space.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

205370: That the Director of SPCD specify what projects increased the 17 acres of open space in the SomerVision Progress Report.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

206393: That, in the interest of tree preservation, the City Solicitor draft a revision of the Tree Ordinance to include restrictions and regulations on cutting trees of at least six inches in diameter on private property, and explain how the proposed revision differs from the ones that Cambridge, Lexington and Newton that have already passed to protect trees on private property.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

204588: That the Administration prioritize restorative and preventative maintenance in Seven Hills Park, including the statues and pillars, the brick Community Path, and the soil and grass.

Ms. Oliveira stated that Seven Hills Park is owned by the MBTA. The City provides irrigation on lawns and some seeding and will continue to do so this fall. It was stated that during the budget season, funding was asked to trim trees, but will require permission from MBTA, as well as, to replace the bricks.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

207726: That the Administration select a pilot location to solicit interest from residents to acquire a walking path right of way, such as across Parkdale and Perry Streets for access to Lincoln Park, or across Albion and Hudson Streets for access to Albion Park.

Ms. Connor stated that resources are devoted to other items and she would be happy to see where this fits in. The Administration will explore the idea with the community.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

207914: That Administration investigate hiring a landscaper to maintain the investments in our city parks' planted areas, softscape, flowerbeds etc.

Ms. Connor stated the position is still open in DPW for someone with horticultural knowledge. It was stated that DPW is down three people. Ms. Connor stated that talking to the City of Cambridge, that this may be a challenge to fill the position. Councilor Niedergang asked if it would be possible to rethink this position and upgrade it. Ms. Antonio expressed interested in the position but was told it was only 20% landscaping and the rest would be shoveling snow.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

208148: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council the status of and staffing for the City’s community gardens program, and the plan and steps being taken to develop new community gardens for the hundreds of residents on the waiting lists.

Ms. Oliveira stated there are plans to expand the community gardens. There are 199 people currently on the waitlist. She also stated there are a lot of competing open space interest. There were discussions about the Conservation Commission and the gardens being self-governed. There are some fees and someone could have a plot for life. The city pays for the water and DPW provides some mulch. Ms. Oliveira stated that a community garden has been proposed for the Art Farm Phase 2.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

202021: That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of SPCD report to this Board on the feasibility of demolishing the bus shelter at Broadway and Cedar Street and replacing it with a garden, small park or sitting area. (2nd request)

Councilor Niedergang stated this is not a high priority and that no one is really using this bus shelter.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

202995: That the Director of SPCD redesign the asphalt front playground at the Kennedy School and work with all stakeholders to make it usable by more people for a broader range of activities.

Councilor Niedergang stated this is in the queue for design and other schools are ahead of this request. Currently, the staff does not have the bandwidth to work on this request.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

207905: That the Administration work with the High School Building Committee to explore any options to sever construction (or take similar actions) of the playing field as part of the High School project, with the intention to incorporate it into a future capital project to include a parking garage beneath the playing surface.

Ms. Connor stated the Administration does not have plans to delay the playing field. They are currently inventorying space and how to use the space and policy. Councilor Ballantyne stated that the playing field is not part of the high school project and the city could not get reimbursed. The field will be part of the CIP. Councilor Niedergang stated for the record that he was against

the parking garage. There is a need for a parking plan for the high school and city hall and maybe there could be a private public partnership opportunity in Gilman Square. Councilor Ballantyne stated the teachers need parking and that data from surrounding areas such as Cambridge and Boston, do not provide parking for the teachers.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

205708: That the Administration immediately pursue creation of a public athletic field and recreation complex atop the 36,000 square foot parking deck proposed for construction in the Union Square eminent domain parcel currently designated "D-2".

Councilor Ballantyne stated this is a really hot topic that has been discussed with US2. Councilor Niedergang stated maybe this could be connected to one of the later phases and could be a community benefit. Ms. Connor will write up an update on this matter.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handouts:

- Open Space Memo (with 206770)
- Timelines (with 207030)
- Open Space Projects (with 207156)
- Fields Master Plan Update (with 207063)