



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Housing, Community Development and Equity Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

6:00 PM

This meeting was held in the Committee Room and via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Strezo at 6:01 pm and adjourned at 7:13 pm on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Sait, Link, and Strezo.), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Councilor Sait joined the meeting at 6:03 pm.

Others present: Director of Economic Development – Rachel Nadkarni, Deputy Director of Economic Development – Dana Whiteside, Senior Planner – Women and Minority Business Support – Adriana Fernandes, Director for Health and Human Services – Karin Carrol, Executive Liaison - Public – Jesse Moos, Assistant City Clerk – Legislative Services – Madalyn Letellier.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jon Link and City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo
Absent: Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [25-1041](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Equity, Gender, Seniors, Families and Vulnerable Populations Committee Meeting of May 27, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**
AYE: Ward Five City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Link and City Councilor At Large Strezo

2. Committee Minutes
(ID # [25-1778](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Housing and Community Development Committee Meeting of November 18, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**
AYE: Ward Five City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Link and City Councilor At Large Strezo

3. Resolution
(ID # [26-0058](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Administration collaborate with East Somerville Main Streets and the Ward 1 City Councilor to promote Eat Out in East to support East Somerville immigrant-owned businesses.

Councilor Strezo highlighted the importance of this conversation, specifically that many business owners of Ward One are part of the immigration population. Executive Director from East Somerville Main Streets, Lindsey Allen, was present to talk on the initiatives to better support the businesses of Ward One. Ms. Allen spoke to the five immigrant owned

businesses that have had to shut their doors since July compared to the three immigrant owned businesses that closed during COVID. Ms. Allen went on to discuss the immense decline in revenue for businesses and now they find themselves in a time where there is less funding support from the state and federal government. More than restaurants are facing these troubles, including barbershops and specialty stores.

Director of Economic Development, Rachel Nadkarni, was present to share what the department has been working on to promote residents to visit local businesses and the partnership with the Communications Department and with Mayor Wilson. There has been a shift from an Instagram campaign to Reddit, where residents are equally as responsive. Director Nadkarni emphasized the shift to the “Loyal 2 Local” campaign which is an effort to encourage residents to visit local residents and is aimed to amplify the Eat Out in East Somerville campaign as well. Senior Planner Fernandes shared the work that has been done to catalogue the events that are happening in a month and get the word out. Councilor Sait spoke on behalf of her ward, Ward Five, who has also expressed similar struggles with their businesses and the collaborative efforts being taken. Councilor Link inquired about the possibility to start a campaign specifically geared to immigrant businesses; Senior Planner Fernandes spoke to the concern about targeting those businesses and putting an unwanted spotlight on them at this time. Deputy Director Whiteside shared the thought process behind promoting, supporting, and enjoying districts rather than putting them under a positive spotlight rather than needing or requesting the support. Conversation shifted to the available grants to support businesses and Director Nadkarni stated that the landscape has changes post COVID and there are not currently direct support grants available for the city however the Community Development Block Grant funding is being used to supplement the Eat Out in East Somerville campaign.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Order
(ID # [26-0083](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Health and Human Services discuss the findings from the recent U.S. Surgeon General Advisory on the Mental Health and Well-Being of Parents and its recommendations to better support parents and caregivers.

Councilor Strezo shared this item has been submitted multiple times since 2024 and this conversation should be on-going and expanded into paternal supports for mental health and how services can be expanded to continue to help struggling parents. Director Carroll was present to speak high-level about the findings in the report. Director Carroll re-iterated the level of stress that parents are experiencing and how it is disproportionate throughout the community based on various social determinants of health. She emphasized that the Health and Human Services (HHS) Department

does what they can to improve the mental health of parents and their children's, including having period products available, diapers, and access to mental health resources, which in turn leads to healthier communities. She spoke to the Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experience (HOPE) framework that is being rolled out in the city that is about uplifting children and their strengths and highlights a positive approach to the family, rather than identifying and treating a child as the problem. Food access and out of school time programming were topics the community said they wanted and through participatory budgeting funds were able to be allocated towards programming. Director Carroll spoke to the various programs available through HHS that are targeted to supporting the well-being of parents and families within the community, the inclusion of funds for these services in the budget every year, as well as working to partner with community organizations when possible. Director Carroll shared that the Somerville Public Schools has a branch of programming available to their families for support.

Councilor Link inquired if there are any funding sources available if the programs that are being supported by outside funding go away, Director Carroll said departments are concerned about how much funding will come through but staff is always working diligently to locate alternative funds and grants that can continue to run the programs and the continued to make efforts to make these programs more sustainable.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

5. Order
(ID # [26-0049](#))

By Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Housing report to this Council how many new housing units have been approved for development, year-by-year, since adoption of SomerVision 2040, and of those numbers, how many are permanently affordable, and how the department defines affordability.

Executive Liaison Moos was present to speak on behalf of the administration and shared that an update is not available yet for this item but will return to committee when more information is available.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE