



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Legislative Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 29, 2022

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Davis at 6:03 pm and adjourned at 7:16 pm. moved to adjourn, and the motion was approved by unanimous roll call vote.

Others present: Aneesh Sahni - Mayor's Office, Brendan Salisbury - City Clerk, Nicholas Antanavica - ISD, David Shapiro - Solicitor's Office, Sarah White - OSPCD, Stephanie Widzowski - Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Lance L. Davis, Vice Chair Ben Ewen-Campen, Willie Burnley Jr., Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott and Jesse Clingan

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [22-1899](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 1,2022.

RESULT: APPROVED

Shot Spotter

2. Order (ID # [22-1057](#)) By Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Ewen-Campen That the Chief of Police report to this Council, any communications between the Police Department and ShotSpotter regarding ambiguous or contested detections.

Taken together with item 22-1056. Dir. Sahni explained that updates on this and item 22-1056 are not ready yet due to the absence of a key person assisting SPD in compiling the information. He said that he could set up a meeting with relevant staff for any interested councilors who may want to learn more before the end of the calendar year, and that staff were preparing to present on numbers for both verified gunshots and instances in which there was an alert, but no confirmed gunshots. Councilor Burnley reiterated that he is requesting data on suspected or verified *false* reports of gunshots.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order (ID # [22-1056](#)) By Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Ewen-Campen That the Chief of Police report to this Council, any verified or suspected false reports of gunshots by ShotSpotter.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Short Term Rental Ordinance

4. Order
(ID # [22-0180](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Scott, Councilor Kelly and Councilor Clingan

That the Director of Housing provide a written update on the current status of compliance with the Short-Term Rental Ordinance.

Taken together with item 22-2050. Dir. Antanavica gave background on the Short-Term Rental Ordinance and explained why the former registration component needed to be removed. He said that because there is now a better understanding of short-term rentals, and the state has made more clarifications in the law, he thinks registration will help with enforcement of the ordinance.

Chair Davis asked if the proposed addition is the same as the previously removed section, to which the answer was yes, possibly with a few updates. Dir. Antanavica explained the current short-term rental process and what would change with the addition of registration. ISD has created a checklist for short-term rentals to follow for best safety practices. Chair Davis asked if the plan is to continue using the software that identifies short-term rentals. Dir. Antanavica said they will, and upon enactment of this ordinance there will be a 90-day compliance period for owners to sign up. He added that ISD does not anticipate needing more staff to implement the changes once current open positions are filled.

Councilor Ewen-Campen urged the city to put forward a communication about the changes to make sure property owners are informed. Councilor Burnley asked about the regional vision for short-term rentals and whether ISD has compared their approach to neighboring municipalities. Dir. Antanavica said that he has had sparing conversations with staff from other municipalities, but there are monthly inspector meetings regionally. He added that the biggest concern from major cities is the potential for short-term rentals to take stock away from affordable housing.

Councilor Scott asked about the fee structure with the intent to make sure the charges are justified. They asked how many short-term rentals are operating according to the software, to which Dir. Antanavica answered between 220 and 250. Councilor Scott pointed out an existing section in the ordinance about registration, Sec. 7-255, and asked why new language is needed. This led to a conversation about whether this topic would be best addressed by the Legislative Matters Committee or the City Council at all, rather than the Administration.

Councilor Scott requested a version of the proposed amendment to the ordinance with redlined changes.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2050](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Chapter 7, Article X of the Code of Ordinances, to add a registry component to the short-term rentals ordinance.

Taken together with item 22-0180.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Demolition Review Ordinance

6. Order (ID # [22-1686](#)) By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson

That this Council work with the Administration to update the Demolition Review Ordinance and administrative process to ensure that all current inhabitants are notified, in their native language, of any proposals to demolish the building in which they reside.

Councilor Ewen-Campen explained that this item applies to buildings older than 75 years that are being reviewed for historic significance. This includes a notification to abutters, but it is only sent to property owners, not tenants. Councilor Ewen-Campen worked with Dir. White of the Historic Planning Division to draft language requiring notice in multiple languages. Dir. White also proposed extending the public hearing window to 65 days because the commission only meets once a month. Councilor Ewen-Campen added that he will work with the Legislative Liaison and Dir. Antanavica on a separate ordinance for buildings less than 75 years old.

Chair Davis asked for the difference between this and other provisions in the Tenant Notification Act. Councilor Ewen-Campen replied that the intent here is simply to have notices provided in five languages. Dir. White added that they are developing a type process so that tenants are notified quickly both when their landlord has applied for historical review and when hearings are scheduled. She said that her division also wants to coordinate closely with other departments such as OHS and ISD, and that it will take longer for properties with tenants to get to a hearing stage due to the ongoing translations, but that they are working with SomerViva to get the work done as soon as possible.

There was a discussion about the City Council's and Administration's preferred timeline to move forward with the item. Chair Davis asked to keep in touch about the timeline as the Administration makes progress on translations and internal processes. He also asked how the change from 35 to 65 days for public hearing would affect a project's timeline, to which Dir. White estimated it would add another month to the process on average.

Councilor Ewen-Campen moved to recommend that the City Council amend the Demolition Review ordinance consistent with discussion in this

Legislative Matters Committee meeting. He said that he would bring a full submission to the City Council meeting to approve, enroll and ordain.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE**