



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

April 25, 2018

REPORT OF THE RODENT ISSUES SPECIAL COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Matthew McLaughlin	Chair	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Vice Chair	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	Alderman At Large	Present	

Others present: Doug Kress - HHS, Cortni Desir - SomerStat, Ade Solarin - ISD, Kit Lilly - Charles River Alley Cats, Stephanie Harris - U. S. Humane Society, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chairman McLaughlin and adjourned at 6:35 PM.

Approval of the March 14, 2018 Minutes

RESULT:

ACCEPTED

205199 - That the Superintendent of Inspectional Services, the Director of Health and Human Services, and the Director of any other department involved in rodent control efforts, appear before this Board's Special Committee on Rodent Issues each month to highlight rodent control efforts.:

The committee received a summary of the April 23rd Rodent Action Team meeting. A rodent expert with over 30 years of pest management experience was hired as a consultant to help update the City's pest management plan and help the city to respond to rodent complaints. He is building a baseline assessment to get more information on the city's construction activity, including the GLX project. The city met with the MBTA and their contractor on two separate occasions and was told that the plan is to set up baiting stations and might also include the use of glue traps in buildings when other methods do not work. The consultant would examine construction sites where rodents would be displaced. There were discussions about low tech ways of finding the rodents in the area and one suggestion was to put a "go pro" camera in the sewers to monitor activity.

Questions were asked about potential hot spots for rodents and how to get the word out to the community about the city's rodent plan. The Communications Department has been working on a mailer and website to make the public aware of the rodent plan. This would include methods

that residents could use to deter rodents from their properties, e.g., using dry ice as a humane way of getting rid of rodents. This method was previously discussed but was not approved by the EPA until recently. It was also suggested to look at the 311 calls and target those areas for outreach to the community.

The consultant's Scope of Work is to: develop a baseline, design a rodent program for procuring pest control, monitor, provide recommendations on the current pest control plan, write a final report and potentially speak at a City of Somerville Town Hall Meeting. Committee members asked what might be different now vs. five years ago, when this consultant worked for the city and were told that the monitoring methods are different due to technology and the use of bait or birth control is not very effective. The Rodent Action Committee consists of the city's HHS Department, ISD, Communications and DPW and is facilitated by SomerStat. There was also a discussion about the city hiring an Environmental Health Liaison with expertise in pest control and rodent mitigation, to develop policy, monitor and evaluate rodent control. Analytical and people skills would be needed to work with the community. This would be a staff position with no supervisory responsibility and would supplement the four ISD employees currently handling rodent issues.

Aldermen Hirsch and Ewen-Campen requested that SomerStat prepare an overview of the rodent complaints reported to 311, with context, to help them get familiar with the situation.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

205338 - That the City Solicitor draft a feral cat ordinance similar to Chicago's, to assist feral cats and address rodent concerns.:

There were two guests at tonight's meeting, Stephanie Harris from the Human Society of the United States and Kit Lilly from Charles River Alley Cats. Ms. Harris found out about Somerville's rodent issue from a Google news alert. She has talked to urban wildlife specialists about rodents and noted that glue traps are inhumane. She also commented that there is no scientific evidence that feral cats would be effective in getting rid of rodents. Relocated cats do not have a good survival rate. Ms. Lilly has been working in Somerville for 15 years to find lost cats and has worked with the city's Animal Control Department. She explained that trapping feral cats is a time intensive effort, and that once caught, they are sterilized, vaccinated and have their ears tipped. Fifty percent of feral cats are abandoned house cats. Ms. Lilly asked about hot spots to determine if feral cats would have an impact on the rodent issue but noted again that they are not an effective way to control rodents. The next step is to have the City Solicitor review Chicago's ordinance language on feral cats. Members discussed the possibility of piloting a feral cats project in one area in Somerville. Mr. Kress expressed his concerns about having these cats in an urban setting and he asked who would oversee the project.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Handout:

- Health Dept. Letter (with 205338)