



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

September 19, 2018

REPORT OF THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ben Ewen-Campen	Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Vice Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven Alderman	Present	

Others present: Michael Glavin - OSPCD, Bryant Gaspard - OSPCD, Ithzel Polanco-Cabadas - OSPCD, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Rositha Durham Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:05 PM by Chairman Ewen-Campen and adjourned at 7:55 PM.

**Approval of the June 6, 2018 Minutes**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>ACCEPTED</b>
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**204990: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on the Affordable Housing Universal Wait List plan and consolidating the process of applying for affordable housing into a single, universal, persistent application, lottery, and wait list.**

Ms. Ellen Schachter, director of housing office for sustainability was not available to attend the committee meeting. Mr. Glavin and Ms. Connor along with Bryant Gaspard and Ithzel Polanco from housing attended the meeting. They discussed their ongoing work on considering whether and how to implement a Universal Wait List, as well as challenges doing so, given the multiple different categories of affordable housing available - including inclusionary units, state public housing, and non-profit developed housing units built using combinations of state and federal money, each of which have different legal restrictions on how wait lists can be prioritized. Somerville OSPCD has hired a consultant to help research this initiative and the work will be completed in September. Draft of the work plan will be available by end of next month. The level of prioritization of urgency and categories will be established. Some may be universally acceptable such as: displacement putting families on street tomorrow making them homeless. There could also be a preference for those victims of fires. Questions were asked if preference could be given to Somerville residents. It was stated that it would be difficult to make preferences for local residents with federal and state funding. It was stated that there are other municipalities which have universal wait lists, and these will be explored in the upcoming report.

The consultant has worked with the housing department previously, and recently graduated with her master's in urban planning from Tufts. It was stated that most housing departments with long wait lists will close the list until more housing becomes available, and that the current lottery system for each new inclusionary opportunity has the benefit that new individuals can enter a list who may have missed previous deadlines. The consultant will also help the housing department determine if they are going in a good direction and how to move forward.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**205286: That the Director of SPCD share what role the city has, or could have with additional staff, in assisting residents with condo association dilemmas, tenant organizing, or ensuring that inclusionary unit owners or tenants have equal voice in building decisions.**

Mr. Glavin and Ms. Connor along with Bryant Gaspard and Ithzel Polanco from housing attended the meeting. There was discussion about how does a public entity step into to help tenants, including the need to potentially provide advice for both tenants and landlords. Ald. Clingan suggested putting information on the city's website on how tenants can get organized, and local groups which may be able to assist tenants and/or landlords. President Ballantyne spoke on the importance of having a place for tenants to go to for information. Other towns have discussed taking a regional approach to set up a framework as a first step, tenant organizing, legal issues and equal voice. Mr. Gaspard talked about the legal issues surrounding inclusionary condo units within otherwise market-rate condominium associations. Because ownership is typically tied to unit value, and inclusionary cost less, the owners of inclusionary units pay less condo fees, and have less financial liability than other owners, and still have the same vote. However, they are inherently a minority within condo associations, as a maximum of 20% of units will be inclusionary in new developments. However, Mr. Gaspard relayed that with few exceptions, they have not heard widespread complaints about this issue from owners of inclusionary condo units.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**205931: That the Director of SPCD inform this Board of any plans to update the Housing Needs Assessment.**

A new report is being worked on.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**206266: That the Director of SPCD, the Director of Housing Stability, or the City Solicitor explain under what circumstances a current resident could be given preference for a deed-restricted unit.**

Mr. Glavin will communicate the current process directly to Alderman Hirsch and the committee.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**206227: That the Administration fund a full-time legal services position to provide free on-**

**site legal assistance to anyone seeking it at Somerville’s District Housing Court.**

Mr. Glavin stated he played a role in 100 Homes Program and is a member of the Mass Housing Investing Corporation. He requested not to be involved so that there is no conflict of interest for both items 206165 and 205670.

Mr. Gaspard distributed a list of 100 homes with the occupancy status. There are 47 homes on the list with 19 currently vacant. In FY19 budget, they are procuring additional assistance to help with asset management, qualifying and verifying, and move people through the process. There were discussions about how the Director of Housing can brainstorm on ways to fix properties as soon as possible. President Ballantyne raised a concern about how long it takes to occupy property. She also suggested adding a couple of columns to the document presented by Mr. Gaspard to include the following: date the property was purchased, renovation completion date, and occupancy date. The president would like to know the timeline on the process. There should also be a date on the document when it’s updated and when the list was started.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**206233: That the Director of SPCD develop an affordable housing program targeted especially at city employees whose income is below a certain threshold level.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**206165: That the Director of SPCD provide this Board with an update on apartment vacancies in the 100 Homes Program.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**205670: That the Director of SPCD provide a progress report on the 100 Homes Program since its inception.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**205706: That the Administration report in writing on the net change in green and open space based on all projects planned for 2018.**

A question was asked about the net gain for green and open space. Ms. Connor stated that she worked with Ms. Stelljes and Mr. Rawson on this matter. In 2018, current planning includes an increase of 2.49 acres green and/or open space, the Art Farm being the majority of that green and open space at 2.1 acres. The 5 Palmer parcel acquisition is .04 acres and 35 Richardson Ave is .35 acres. Since 2010, the total net gain is 16.04 acres. These numbers will be included in upcoming SomerVision updates to the committee.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**206391: That the Administration submit an update to this Board on efforts to create a Municipal ID, including a plan for dealing with the encryption of information that appears**

**to be holding back progress.**

Ms. Connors stated that the Administration remains firmly committed to a Municipal ID program, which would offer an Official ID for individuals who may otherwise not be able to obtain a drivers license, for example for reasons of immigration documentation. Mrs. Connors and others have been working on this issue to identify challenges and opportunities, and has done extensive research of other cities across the country. The purpose of such an ID would be to help people for example open a local bank accounts, use ID for doctors and emergency room visits, change gender with name change, and if stopped by police. Mrs. Connors review of similar programs has highlighted a number of issues, including: New York has caused some residents problems, including that some residents were arrested after presenting ID to police, on suspicion of being undocumented. There is also concerns that collection of data could expose residents to subpoenas of personal data, although this does appear to be protected from Freedom of Information Act requests. One option, which is how San Francisco handles the issue, is to simply not retain records after issuing a license. Boston did a study and decided not to pursue at this point. New York launched an \$8M enterprise a few years ago on this matter for banking and museums for those who do not have any other ID. There could be a range of needs within the communities for this effort. There was a discussion to market this to a broader audience along with perks to encourage people from all backgrounds to sign up. The city would have to make sure the local police are on board, and Mrs. Connors assured the committee that Somerville Police are indeed fully supportive. It was stated that state government may not recognize this form of ID, and that we will require outreach to neighboring communities so that their law enforcement and agencies also recognize Somerville Municipal IDs. The main goal of this request is to protect undocumented people. Chairman Ewen-Campen will update Alderman Niedergang, who submitted the Order.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**205287: That the Community Preservation Act Manager inform this Board whether or not small open spaces can be designated as publicly accessible open space in combination with an affordable housing or historic preservation funding allocation.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**205676: Community Preservation Manager responding to #205287 re: current practices on designating open space in CPA affordable housing and historic resources projects.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**206057: That the Director of SPCD make the online decision/report database searchable by applicant name.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**200700: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board on the plan and timeline for implementing the recommendations in the recent report of the Sustainable Neighborhoods**

**Working Group.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**204533: That the Administration request that the developers of the long-vacant Cobble Hill Plaza update this Board on their plans.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**204851: That the Administration update this Board on its efforts to form an Office of Housing Stability, as recommended by the Sustainable Neighborhoods Working Group and mentioned in the Mayor's recent inaugural address.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**204863: That the Administration update this Board on the former Winter Hill Star Market and the associated lawsuit, as requested in #201772.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**204884: That this Board explore establishing a community-based independent Community Land Trust that can purchase property in conjunction with non-profit organizations and private citizens, and make housing permanently affordable.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**204967: That the Director of SPCD provide this Board with the street repaving schedule for 2018.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**204975: That the City Solicitor provide an opinion on whether this Board can require landlords to distribute voter registration forms to all new tenants.**

This item and item #24 were discussed together. This item was based upon a similar order in Seattle. It was stated a court could challenge this and maybe the safest approach would be a Home Rule Petition. It was also stated some of the committee members do not believe this to be a huge burden on the landlord. Chairman Ewen-Campen talked about the low voter turnout and this may help let people know about civic responsibilities. The Chair will come back with examples as to how Seattle handled this item.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**203981: That the Director of SPCD develop a Memorial Bench Program for public parks, the Community Path and other public property, and report back to this Board by October 12, 2017.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**205127: Director of SPCD responding to #203981 re: a memorial bench donation program.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**205389: Assistant City Solicitor responding to #204975 re: requiring landlords to distribute voter registration forms to all new tenants.**

See discussion of item 204975.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**205098: That the Administration update this Board on opportunities for expanded advertisement of the city's tax deferral program, and other tools that may help seniors and homeowners on fixed incomes to achieve financial stability.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**205245: Condemning the outsourcing of 100 medical coding jobs by Partners Healthcare to India, and requesting from Partners Healthcare how many of those jobs were based in Somerville and/or held by Somerville residents.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**206496: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on the plan in the "Equity Talent Playbook for Somerville".**

Mr. Galligani from OSPCD will update the committee on this matter some time this fall.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**202258: Planning Board conveying its recommendations re: #200102 (inclusionary housing), with respect to Tenancy Preservation.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**202259: Planning Board conveying its recommendations re: #200102 (inclusionary housing), with respect to Waiting Lists.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**205099: That the Director of Libraries share his vision for neighborhood access to branch libraries and/or library services.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**205317: Director of Libraries responding to #205099 re: the Libraries' vision for neighborhood access to branch libraries and services.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**206487: That the Administration discuss with this Board a plan to create a permanent space for the Groundworks Somerville program, currently known as the South Street Farm, which is planned for displacement.**

Chair Ewen-Campen talked with Groundworks and Ald. Scott on this matter. The planning division is fully aware of this matter. It was stated that Groundworks is a great partner for the community. CPA requires there be a 3<sup>rd</sup> party that owns and funds the property. Groundworks can be a partner to hold the city accountable. Possible locations were discussed such as: Boynton Yard and Union Square. Groundworks will come before the committee at some point.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**202497: That the Superintendent of Schools share plans with the Ward 7 Alderman to mitigate the negative student enrollment at the West Somerville Neighborhood School caused by the proposed Clarendon/North Street Public Housing project.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**203275: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on plans developed in 2013-2015 to redevelop the outdoor space at the Brown School, and work with the Superintendent of Schools, the Brown School Council and PTA, neighbors, and other stakeholders to improve the space.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**203698: That the Director of SPCD discuss options property owners have to split lots in residential neighborhoods.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>WORK COMPLETED</b>
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**Handout:**

- 100 Homes Occupancy (with 206165)