



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Open Space, Environment and Energy Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 16, 2023

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Burnley at 6:02 pm and adjourned at 6:44 pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor, none opposed, and one absent (Councilor Gomez Mouakad).

Councilor Gomez Mouakad left at 6:30 to attend a Land Use Committee meeting.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo – Mayor’s Office, Emily Sullivan – OSE, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Willie Burnley Jr., Vice Chair Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Beatriz Gomez Mouakad , Jake Wilson and Judy Pineda Neufeld

1. Order
(ID # [23-0070](#))

By Councilor Wilson and Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment update this Council on plans for a pilot of on-street direct current fast charging stations for electric vehicles.

Climate Change Program Manager Sullivan said that OSE is looking to develop a community-wide electric vehicle strategy, including assessing installation for direct current fast charging stations. OSE is currently working with the Mobility, Parking and Engineering departments to finalize an RFP.

Councilor Wilson asked about the constraints on the electric grid should electric vehicle usage in Somerville rise sharply. He also raised that a constituent got a ticket for parking in the wrong direction on Evergreen Ave to use a charging station and asked if, in addition to resolving this issue with the constituent, the city will revisit parking regulations to accommodate parking at charging stations. Ms. Sullivan said that OSE will coordinate with Eversource on grid capacity, and that she would discuss parking regulations with the Parking department.

Chair Burnley asked how much OSE has considered installing a variety of types of EV charging stations. He also asked about the potential for the city to own part of the electric grid or have municipal generators. Ms. Sullivan said that a report on ideal station locations was released in 2021, but it did not describe technology in detail. She said she would look into the second question.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad commented that a car manufacturer is looking to install EV chargers at no cost and stated that the city should take advantage of offers like these by finishing the RFP soon. She also said parking management plans would be needed for onstreet charging stations.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

2. Order
(ID # [23-0092](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld and Councilor Wilson

That the Directors of Mobility and Traffic and Parking discuss with this Council the use of meters at electric vehicle charging stations and ability for the City's vendor to impose a monetary charge after a certain amount of time that the vehicle is parked there.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld noted the differences between charging stations in residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, and that in residential areas, residents wait until meters stop running and park there overnight, causing a rush in the off-hours. This issue inspired the monetary charge idea in this item. Councilor Pineda Neufeld commented that the goal with the meters is car turnover rather than revenue, but residents are working around the meters instead of using them as intended. Ms. Sullivan said that OSE is exploring this idea with other departments and can share updates as they develop. She said she could bring questions about metered parking to the Parking department.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order
(ID # [22-0951](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Kelly and Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Sustainability and Environment update this Council on any plans for a municipal composting program.

Ms. Sullivan said that OSE is finalizing a contract with a consultant for a zero waste planning process, part of which will involve making recommendations for a composting program. When that consultant work is finished this year, there will be an update for this item. Ms. Sullivan talked about the details of the consultant's work analyzing waste management.

Councilor Wilson said that he would like to see the municipal pilot program done in areas with low rates of adoption of private composting programs. He also called for the Administration to use rodent control as a framing in educational materials, which should be available in many languages.

Councilor Scott asked questions about the cost for the work, which will total approximately \$75,000, and how Somerville plans to achieve a 90% reduction in waste. Ms. Sullivan said that the 90% target is largely informed by the Massachusetts Solid Waste Master Plan for 2020-2030.

Chair Burnley asked how certain it is that the consultant plan will include composting, and how much funding has been allotted to the pilot program to date. Ms. Sullivan said she is confident composting will be included, and that she would follow up on the pilot funding.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Order
 (ID # [22-0828](#))

By Councilor Wilson, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Clingan and Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry update this Council on plans to dramatically increase the number of trees in Foss Park.

Councilor Wilson noted that the park is owned and operated by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), who constructed a new astroturf field at Foss Park. The new field contributes to the heat island effect, but trees mitigate its impact. Councilor Wilson said he would like to see a similar approach at Foss Park to the one taken at Conway Park. He talked about air quality and particulate matter concerns at Foss Park. Finally, he said that if cost is an issue, there are likely many options for corporate partners.

Councilor Scott asked about the status of tree plantings that were scheduled to take place at Foss Park. Liaison Carrillo said that she would take the question back to the Administration and shared that 30 new trees were planted there in 2021.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE