

To: Public Health and Public Safety Committee

From: Charles Femino Chief of Police, Somerville Police Department

Date: 1/23/23

22-1307 That the Chief of Police provide this Council with a written report on the number of calls for service related to un-housed individuals, the nature of those calls, and the number directed toward or responded to in collaboration with the Somerville Homeless Coalition.

The Department's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system is not designed to document the housing status of individuals involved in calls for service (CFS). In each incident, dispatchers may or may not make note of this information. This would vary based on the information provided to dispatch by the caller, the involvement of the reporting party, the type and context of the incident, and dispatchers' discretion. Consequently, the information available is not standardized nor reliable. As one example, callers may be more likely to report that an individual is unhoused in certain types of incidents such as trespassing or obvious medical emergencies while omitting the information (or not recognizing it) in other types such as those where the unhoused individual is a victim of a crime. Therefore, the calls for service identified as involving unhoused individuals may have significant gaps and fail to represent the quantity and nature of all relevant calls for service. As a result, drawing conclusions based on this information may generate false or misleading narratives around the full scope of the issue.

Keeping this in mind, a review of calls for service between July 1, 2021, through November 15, 2022, indicated that the housing status of involved individuals (as being unhoused) was mentioned or likely in 369 calls for service. Over 40% of these calls for service were for "Unwanted Guest(s)." The next most frequent were "Check Condition" and "Sick Person" which together represented another 30%. The remaining calls for service were composed of 33 different service types.

The Department's Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system does not contain detailed information regarding activity and efforts that occur subsequent to each call for service. For this reason, there is no data available on the number of calls for service "directed towards or responded to in collaboration with the Somerville Homeless Coalition". We continue to partner with the Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC) on an as needed basis. Specifically, SHC staff will work in collaboration with COHR when they are trying to connect with an individual related to housing or when they haven't seen an individual and are concerned for their welfare.