



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 6, 2022

6:00 PM

Others present: Jessica Pavao – Human Resources Manager, Deputy Chief Christopher Ward - SPD, Deputy Chief Chris Major – SFD, Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Pineda Neufeld adjourned at 7:15 PM on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Wilson, Clingan, Kelly and Pineda Neufeld), none against and 1 absent (Councilor Strezo). Councilor Strezo left this meeting to attend a meeting of the Land Use Committee.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Judy Pineda Neufeld, Vice Chair Kristen Strezo, Charlotte Kelly, Jesse Clingan and Jake Wilson

1. Mayor's Request
(ID # [22-1581](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Mark Atwater to the position of Firefighter.

Deputy Chief Major introduced candidate, Mark Atwater, who thanked the committee members for taking the time to meet with the candidates. Councilor Kelly asked the candidate how he sees his role in de-escalating situations and responding with trauma informed practices. Mr. Atwater replied that he would fall back on what he learned in college and would work to be that selfless individual who would be there for others. Councilor Wilson asked if any of the appointments before the committee tonight are bypasses and Ms. Pavao said there was one bypass and one disqualification to get to the three before the committee tonight. He then asked the candidate why wanted to be a fire fighter and Mr. Atwater said that it's always something he wanted to do, adding that he will put others first, pay attention to detail, and follow the chain of command - things that he learned in the military. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate what excites him and what concerns him about being a fire fighter and Mr. Atwater replied that he is excited about helping out in any way he can to help the city that he loves and that he's concerned about not knowing what he doesn't know. Chair Pineda Neufeld verified that the candidate had received and understood the Notice of a possible Executive Session. She also informed the candidate that any action taken by the committee tonight regarding this appointment is not official until approved by the City Council.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: Vice Chair Strezo

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-1582](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Zachary Avery to the position of Firefighter.

Deputy Chief Major introduced candidate, Zachary Avery, who is a current employee of the city's Water Department. Councilor Kelly asked the candidate how he sees his role in de-escalating situations and responding with trauma informed practices. Mr. Avery replied that his role would be to understand what is going on in the person's life at that time and take steps to try to calm the person down. Councilor Wilson asked why the candidate wanted to be a fire fighter and Mr. Avery said that his father was a fire fighter in a smaller department and that allowed him to be able to spend a lot of his time as a youngster at the fire house. In addition to his father, he also has uncles who are fire fighters. He went on to say that he believes his military training will serve him well as a fire fighter. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate what excites him and what concerns him about being a fire fighter and Mr. Avery replied that he's excited to be part of a team that puts others before self and said that he's a bit nervous about learning everything he needs to know about doing the job.

Chair Pineda Neufeld verified that the candidate had received and understood the Notice of a possible Executive Session. She also informed the candidate that any action taken by the committee tonight regarding this appointment is not official until approved by the City Council.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: Vice Chair Strezo

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-1584](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Joseph Nutile to the position of Firefighter.

Deputy Chief Major introduced candidate, Joseph Nutile. Councilor Kelly asked the candidate how he sees his role in de-escalating situations and responding with trauma informed practices. Mr. Nutile replied that his role would be to understand the situation at hand and would call on his leadership skills to determine the best course of action. Councilor Wilson asked why the candidate wanted to be a fire fighter and Mr. Nutile said that he always wanted to be a fire fighter and he views its structure as being very similar to that of the military. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate what excites him and what concerns him about being a fire fighter Mr. Nutile replied that he's excited to build a long career with great people and helping others as much as possible, and he's concerned about those times when he may not be able to help.

Chair Pineda Neufeld verified that the candidate had received and

understood the Notice of a possible Executive Session. She also informed the candidate that any action taken by the committee tonight regarding this appointment is not official until approved by the City Council.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: Vice Chair Strezo

4. Mayor's Request
(ID # [22-1257](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Mackenzie Richardson to the position of Police Sergeant.

Deputy Chief Ward introduced Officer Mackenzie Richardson, who has been with the SPD for 7.5 years. Officer Richardson has embedded herself in the community by participating in several organizations and activities within the city. She has also received extensive training in crisis intervention. Councilor Kelly asked the candidate about how she would respond to an officer using excessive force and Officer Richardson responded by saying that she would take that officer aside and go through departmental policy to advise the officer of the proper conduct, adding that if it happened again, she would move for disciplinary action. Councilor Kelly asked the candidate what trauma informed care looked like to her, and also asked for her philosophy on the use of force. Officer Richardson replied that it's important to recognize that a person may be experiencing trauma at a particular moment, and she would employ different methods to try to calm the person down. With respect to the use of force question, Officer Richardson replied that nobody want to use force and that she would take the time to communicate with people before considering using force. Councilor Kelly asked what the value of an unarmed emergency response force. Officer Richardson answered that she believes that such a force would be useful, however, she thinks that there should be a co-response to have an officer on scene for safety, however, and thinks health care professionals may have better skills to deal with some situations. Councilor Kelly asked the candidate how she would lead others in accepting some of the proposed policing changes. Officer Richardson replied that she would like to be involved with the process and would lead by example.

Councilor Wilson asked the candidate her view on education vs. citation and Officer Richardson stated that she favors education. Councilor Wilson asked her experience on the bike patrol and she thinks it provides greater accessibility than a cruiser. Councilor Wilson asked the candidate if she has ever witnessed misconduct by a fellow police officer and she said that she she had not, except, perhaps, for some rude language being used. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate to share a proud moment she experienced on the job and Officer Richardson spoke about interacting with a young girl and being seen as a role model by her.

Chair Pineda Neufeld verified that the candidate had received and

understood the Notice of a possible Executive Session. She also informed the candidate that any action taken by the committee tonight regarding this appointment is not official until approved by the City Council.

A motion to enter into Executive Session to discuss item 22-1257 was approved on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Wilson, Clingan, Kelly and Pineda Neufeld), none against and 1 absent (Councilor Strezo). This meeting was recessed to enter into Executive Session at 6:48 PM.

This meeting was reconvened at 6:55 PM and Chair Pineda Neufeld reported that no votes were taken in Executive Session, other than the vote to adjourn.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Wilson

ABSENT: Vice Chair Strezo

5. Resolution
(ID # [22-0674](#))

By Councilor Kelly

That the Administration present an update on the Board and Commission recruitment process, as detailed within.

Liaison Carrillo explained that there are a lot of moving pieces involved and there is much more to do, so the Administration is committed to taking the time needed to do this correctly. Currently, there are vacancies on 5 boards/commissions and those positions are listed on the city's website. Liaison Carrillo noted that a staff person who was assisting in this effort has left the city's employ, reducing the size of the staff assigned to this matter. Meeting with the Racial and Social Justice Department have been held to ensure that nothing is overlooked. The Administration will be rolling out a demographic survey to hone in on where recruitment needs to be increased. Councilor Kelly asked if the Administration has rejected any candidates who have applied for vacancies as she is aware of people who went through the process and have not been put on a board/commission. Liaison Carrillo replied that the Administration will respond to all candidates, adding that the mayor is the appointing body and has the right to reject any candidate. Councilor Kelly asked the City Council be advised when a candidate is rejected for a board/commission position and be provided with the reason(s) for the rejection. Councilor Wilson asked about people filling expired terms and Liaison Carrillo did not have a timeline for filling expired terms.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

6. Order
(ID # [22-0209](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

That the Committee on Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters discuss and revise the process for reviewing appointments and re-appointments.

This item will be kept in committee until all committee members can be present to discuss it.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE