



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Public Utilities and Public Works Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 13, 2023

6:30 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Clingan at 6:33 pm and adjourned at 7:12 with a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Chair Clingan), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Kelly).

Councilor Kelly left early for a Public Health and Public Safety Committee meeting.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo – Mayor’s Office, Denise Taylor – Communications, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Jesse Clingan, Vice Chair Beatriz Gomez Mouakad and Charlotte Kelly

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [22-2075](#)) Approval of the Public Utilities and Public Works Committee Minutes of December 5, 2022.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Clingan, Vice Chair Gomez Mouakad and City Councilor At Large Kelly

DPW

2. Order (ID # [23-0143](#)) By Councilor Strezo
That the Commissioner of Public Works immediately remove the wires wrapped around a telephone pole and in the street in front of 19 Church Street, and report to this Council who owns the pole.

Taken together with item 23-1042. Dir. Lathan sent a communication that the removals were completed on February 2 and that Eversource owned both poles.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

3. Order (ID # [23-0142](#)) By Councilor Strezo and Councilor McLaughlin
That the Commissioner of Public Works immediately remove the wires hanging from the pole and tied to the porch railing at 9 Pearl Street Place, and report to this Council who owns the pole.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Order
(ID # [23-0061](#))
- By Councilor Strezo
That the Commissioner of Public Works report on the maintenance schedule of street and traffic lights, including the number damaged or burned out.

Chair Clingan talked about a situation with lights out on Broadway that could not easily be fixed. Councilor Gomez Mouakad suggested asking if it is possible, when excavating for roadwork, to check the status of wiring for lights and any potential upgrades.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [23-0149](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Commissioner of Public Works provide an update on current and future maintenance plans for the Armory building.

Chair Clingan commented that the maintenance plans seem to focus on custodial work. Councilor Gomez Mouakad said that with the new plan for the Armory, there might be necessary upgrades for the building and said she would follow up on those separately. She also requested to be sent a report on Armory updates every 6 months.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Office of Sustainability

6. Order
(ID # [23-0071](#))
- By Councilor Wilson
That the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment and the Commissioner of Public Works update this Council on plans for household hazardous waste collection.

Chair Clingan asked about the status of a long-term contract that OSE is negotiating with a vendor to pick up waste in addition to having a drop-off period. Liaison Carrillo said that she remembers discussing yard waste in committee, but not hazardous waste and would follow up on that information. Currently, there are no updates on the contract.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communications

7. Resolution
(ID # [23-0056](#))
- By Councilor Clingan, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson
That the Administration update this Council on the cable franchise contract negotiations with Comcast and explain what the process entails.

Taken together with item 23-0138. Chair Clingan explained that there was an announcement a few hours before this meeting about franchise fees that changes the agreement going forward. The contract was also posted, and Dir. Taylor sent a communication outlining the negotiation process. A second public hearing was hosted just before this meeting.

Dir. Taylor explained the rationale behind the Mayor's decision to propose moving education and government access services into the general fund, which will allow the city to move the 5% franchise fees to the Somerville Media Center. She said that the Administration is also proposing a 50/50 split for capital equipment funds. The impact for the Somerville Media Center is an estimated \$1 million extra in funding in the next 3 years. Dir. Taylor said that the Administration would like the Council to approve the shift of education and government services into the general fund.

Questions from the Chair led to further discussion about the previous and new contracts. Dir. Taylor said that Comcast has sent a legally-binding communication that they will honor the previous agreement until the current license is renewed. She also said there is some urgency in moving forward with the new contract, but the Administration will want to review a few items discussed at the most recent public hearing first. She also talked about provisions in the new contract that improve on the last. Finally, she said that the timing is somewhat staggered, but the details of the shift will be memorialized in the upcoming agreement between the city and the Somerville Media Center, and outlined in the FY24 budget.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

8. Resolution
(ID # [23-0138](#))

By Councilor Clingan and Councilor Strezo

That the Administration provide an update on contract negotiations with local cable providers at the February 13, 2023 meeting of this Council's Committee on Public Utilities and Public Works.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

PUPW - 2023-02-13 DPW Responses (with 23-0061, 23-0071, 23-0142, 23-0143, 23-0149)