



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

### Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 11, 2024

7:00 PM

The meeting took place virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 7:03 PM by Chair Pineda Neufeld and adjourned at 8:04 PM on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Sait, Burnley, McLaughlin and Pineda Neufeld), none against and none absent.

Others present:

Karin Carroll – Director of Health and Human Services, Charles Breen – Chief Fire Engineer, Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

#### Roll Call

**Present:** Chairperson Judy Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr. and Ward One City Councilor Wilfred N. Mbah

**Absent:** Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0647](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee Meeting of May 1, 2024.

**RESULT:** ACCEPTED

**AYE:** Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

**ABSENT:** Ward Five City Councilor Sait

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0582](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Margaret H. Coit to the Board of Health.

Director Carroll explained the duties of the Board of Health and introduced candidate Margaret Coit. Ms. Coit thanked the committee for the opportunity and said she looks forward to serving her community. Councilor McLaughlin thanked the candidate for offering to serve and asked about her thought process towards public health and safety and doing what the public favors. The candidate said she bases her decisions on evidence and listening to others in the health field. Councilor Burnley asked Ms. Coit what municipal challenges are in public health and how they can be addressed and she said that one has to be able to communicate to the community about the evidence and explained what's really going on. The big concerns are for the most vulnerable, e.g., elderly neighbors, unhoused people, etc.. People want to know that someone is thinking about and

looking out for them.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked about the role of the position post COVID and what the candidate would look for as the right sources of information, in the absence of good data. Ms. Coit said that data can be collected just by talking to people. She also said that it's important to think ahead to the kinds of data we might need in the future and find ways to fill the information collection gaps. Chair Pineda Neufeld pointed out that Somerville did things differently than other communities during COVID and she asked the candidate what grade she would give the city's pandemic response. Ms. Coit said there are many aspects involved and it was frustrating to her when decisions were made without evidence and also when decisions weren't made quickly enough. She thinks communication may have been a better approach. Adding that there was not enough outreach to disabled people to get their input. She said that she couldn't give a grade but said there were opportunities for improvement, however, she never felt at risk in the city.

Chair Pineda Neufeld explained that the appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council at its next meeting on June 13, 2024.

**RESULT:**        **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

**AYE:**            Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor  
McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward  
One City Councilor Mbah

**ABSENT:**        Ward Five City Councilor Sait

3. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [24-0581](#))

Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Alyssa DuBois to the Board of Health.

Director Carroll introduced candidate Alyssa DuBois.

Councilor McLaughlin thanked the candidate for offering to serve and he asked about her thought process towards public health and safety and doing what the public thinks is right. Ms. DuBois said she would check her own biases and look at the evidence, do research, bring facts to the table and share the information with the Board. She said that it's good practice to be reassessing where decisions are rooted. Councilor Burnley spoke about community engagement and asked how that would enhance public health and Ms. DuBois said she has seen the biological consequences when there isn't enough support for people and that facilitating from person to service would make things better. Councilor Mbah asked how she would leverage her Board position to help with the rodent problem in the city and Ms. DuBois said that bringing light to tenant/landlord responsibilities might help.

Chair Pineda Neufeld asked about the role of the position post COVID and

what the candidate would look for as the right sources of information, in the absence of good data. Ms. DuBois said there are still some metrics available and hopefully we can get smarter about data collection in the future. With the shift of public interest away from COVID, it's a good chance to determine where the majority of research needs to be and that some new research might mitigate the lessened amount of available data. Chair Pineda Neufeld pointed out that Somerville did things differently than other communities during COVID and she asked the candidate what grade she would give the city's pandemic response. Ms. DuBois said she would value the number and severity of cases, the amount of public knowledge, and knowing if the city were doing everything it could. She said that it's hard to know what could have been done differently given the information at hand, adding that doing things differently is not necessarily a bad thing.

Chair Pineda Neufeld explained that the appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council at its next meeting on June 13, 2024.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

**AYE:** Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward One City Councilor Mbah

**ABSENT:** Ward Five City Councilor Sait

4. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [24-0804](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Michael Finnegan to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen introduced the candidate, Michael Finnegan, a Navy veteran who holds several technical rescue certifications and has been in the SFD for 17 years.

Councilor Mbah asked the candidate what new initiatives he could bring to the department and how his role has changed. Acting Lieutenant Finnegan said he evaluates the skills of the people he works with and draws on that experience and hopes to set the pace for other in the department, especially the newer fire fighters. Councilor Burnley asked how the candidate's Hurricane Katrina experience would be beneficial in the event of a natural disaster here and Acting Lieutenant Finnegan said that military training is similar to fire fighting training and he emphasized that it takes constant training, equipment, and manpower to deal with catastrophic situations. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate what he's looking forward to and what challenges he might encounter. The candidate said that the way the city is expanding, with Assembly Square and various high rise buildings, is exciting because it challenges the fires are battled and it involves strategy and tactics.

Chair Pineda Neufeld explained that the appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council at its next meeting on June 13, 2024.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**  
**AYE:** Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor  
McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward  
One City Councilor Mbah  
**ABSENT:** Ward Five City Councilor Sait

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0803](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Matthew Kane to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen introduced the candidate Matthew Kane, a Marine veteran who has been with the SFD since 2011. Acting Lieutenant Kane told the committee that he has been stationed at 4 of the 5 fire houses in the city. Councilor Mbah asked the candidate about his leadership style and what new initiatives he could bring to the job and the candidate replied that his style is to actively listen to people and to train and mentor others. Chair Pineda Neufeld asked the candidate what he's looking forward to and what challenges he might encounter. Acting Lieutenant Kane said that he's looking forward to having a sense of accomplishment at the end of each day and also to motivating others.

Chair Pineda Neufeld explained that the appointment would not be official until it is approved by the City Council at its next meeting on June 13, 2024.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**  
**AYE:** Chairperson Pineda Neufeld, Ward One City Councilor  
McLaughlin, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward  
One City Councilor Mbah  
**ABSENT:** Ward Five City Councilor Sait