



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee

### Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday, April 8, 2025**

**6:30 PM**

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Ewen-Campen at 6:31 pm and adjourned at 7:37 pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Strezo, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Councilor Clingan joined the meeting at 6:45 pm.

Others present: Charles Breen - Fire Chief, Shumeane Benford - Police Chief, Public Safety Consultant for the Housing Authority - Charles Femino, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

#### Roll Call

**Present:** Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Kristen Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Judy Pineda Neufeld

**Absent:** Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0420](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee Meeting of March 5, 2025.

**RESULT:** **ACCEPTED**

**AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0572](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Eric Saulnier to the position of Fire Captain.

Chief Breen spoke to the candidate for promotion, who is currently serving as an acting captain. The Chief highlighted the candidate's qualifications, including his education and active involvement in the community. Chair Ewen-Campen asked how long the candidate had been acting in the role and what distinguishes being a captain. Mr. Saulnier, the candidate, responded that he has been acting as captain for about two years and shared the extensive knowledge he has gained since working in the fire prevention department, along with the valuable skills he has developed during that time.

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

**AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld  
**ABSENT:** Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

3. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [25-0573](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Mark Wall to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen introduced the candidate that is currently acting as Lieutenant on Engine 6. Mr. Barry expressed his gratitude for being part of the fire department. When Chair Ewen-Campen asked how long he has been an acting captain, Mr. Barry shared that it has been about three years, during which he has filled in for long-term leave, vacancies, or retirements.

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

**AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld  
**ABSENT:** Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

4. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [25-0574](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Patrick Barry to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen introduced the candidate that is currently acting as Lieutenant on Engine 6. Mr. Barry expressed his gratitude for being part of the fire department. When Chair Ewen-Campen asked how long he has been an acting captain, Mr. Barry shared that it has been about three years, during which he has filled in for long-term leave, vacancies, or retirements.

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

**AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld  
**ABSENT:** Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

5. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [25-0575](#))

Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Joseph Laudano to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen shared the candidate has been a member of the fire department since 2015, is an EMT, has a bachelor's degree from Temple University, has worked as a football coach, and has experience in both the Recreation and Department of Public Works(DPW). He is currently serving as an acting lieutenant in the Homeland Security Division.

When Chair Ewen-Campen asked what it means to serve in the homeland security role, Mr. Laudano explained that his duties include checking meters for radiation calibration to detect any unusual occurrences in the city, managing grants, and taking the opportunity to learn more in this field.

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

**AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

**ABSENT:** Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

6. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0577](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Troy Saulnier to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen shared that the candidate has been a member of the fire department since 2017, is an EMT, holds an associate's degree in fire science, coaches hockey at Somerville High School, and is currently acting captain on Engine 6.

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

**AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

**ABSENT:** Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0578](#)) Requesting confirmation of the promotion of Eric Collins to the position of Fire Lieutenant.

Chief Breen introduced the candidate, stating that he has been a member of the fire department since 2018, is an EMT, holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, and is currently serving as an acting lieutenant on Engine 2.

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

**AYE:** Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Three City Councilor Strezo and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

**ABSENT:** Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

There was a discussion about the reappointment process before reviewing any candidates. It was clarified that these positions are not considered Civil Service, with appointments made by Chief Femino through the Mayor as special officers. Historically, reappointments were not made annually, but background checks were submitted to the previous mayor's administration. However, after discrepancies were found when Mr. Femino returned as Chief in 2021, it was decided that reappointments would be presented to the committee more regularly moving forward. An indemnification agreement was also established, ensuring that officers are not considered city employees, and that an insurance policy is in place to protect the city from any legal repercussions of their actions.

Councilor McLaughlin raised the issue of approving or rejecting candidates, and Mr. Femino explained that the process is new, involving the Law office and the Somerville Housing Legal Team. He noted that the current officers have been employed for many years and are in good standing. Chair Ewen-Campen asked about the role of the Councilors in the process, and Chief Benford clarified that the Mayor is the legal appointing authority, with the law governing the process.

Regarding complaints about officers, it was explained that complaints would go to the Director of Housing, who would forward them to Mr. Femino for investigation before any disciplinary actions are taken. Chair Ewen-Campen inquired if complaint records could be reviewed in an executive session, and Mr. Femino clarified that, for the officers before the committee, there are no written complaints. Going forward, a process will be implemented to keep records, allowing Councilors to review them prior to reappointments.

Councilor McLaughlin asked if the vote before the committee was impacted by any of these factors. Chair Ewen-Campen and Councilor Clingan agreed that they would like to seek an opinion from the Solicitor's office before proceeding with a vote. All Councilors agreed. Lastly, Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked if the Housing Authority is bound by the Welcoming City ordinance, which prohibits cooperation with ICE. Mr. Femino confirmed that the same policies in place for the Somerville Police Department also apply to Somerville Housing Officers.

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0404](#)) Requesting confirmation of the re-appointment of Sean Browne as Somerville Housing Authority Police Officer.

Mr. Femino introduced the candidate, who has been a member of the department for 30 years, joining Somerville Housing in 2007, and works the evening shift. EC asked the candidate to speak about his experience, and Officer Browne described the job as feeling like a family and shared that the city's diverse community makes his work enjoyable every day.

Councilor McLaughlin inquired how Officer Browne handles the city's diverse population. He explained that while there is a learning curve, approaching people with compassion is key. When asked about precautions taken while driving, Officer Browne emphasized the importance of being aware of your surroundings and driving safely through the streets.

Councilor Clingan asked about an average shift, and Officer Browne responded that no two shifts are the same, as the work is call-based, and he tries to contact each constituent and building.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked how Officer Browne works with residents whose first language is not English. He explained that he collaborates with

the Somerville Police Department (SPD), who have officers on shifts that speak various languages. If that's not an option, they use a language line, and if that's unavailable, they try to connect with neighbors or relatives to assist in communication, exploring various solutions.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

9. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0403](#)) Requesting confirmation of the re-appointment of Michael De Bethencourt as Somerville Housing Authority Police Officer.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

10. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0402](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Alfred William Rymill III as Somerville Housing Authority Police Officer.

The candidate, who graduated from UMass Lowell in 2010, has been serving as a housing police officer since 2019. When asked about his experience, he described the work as community-oriented and noted the diversity in the area, where he is exposed to many different backgrounds and gets to know everyone by name, building strong relationships.

Councilor McLaughlin asked how the candidate deals with the city's diverse population. Mr. Rymill emphasized that he treats everyone the same, regardless of their background. When asked about caution while driving and traffic safety, the candidate explained that they try to obey and enforce the rules of the road, while also being available to assist the Somerville Police Department (SPD) when needed.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld inquired about working with residents whose first language is not English. The candidate echoed the approach of the previous officer, explaining that communication with diverse populations is key, and using resources like language lines or working with SPD officers who speak different languages helps bridge any gaps.

Councilor Clingan asked about what an average shift looks like, and the candidate shared similar thoughts of the previous answer.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

11. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1689](#)) Requesting confirmation of the appointment of Alfred Rymill III as Housing Authority Police Officer.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE**