



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

Legislation Text

File #: 23-1459, Version: 1

Agenda Summary

In opposition to “Cop City”.

Official Text

- WHEREAS:** The City of Atlanta plans to use funding from the Atlanta Police Foundation and private investors to construct an Atlanta Public Safety Training Center, also known as “Cop City”, on approximately 85 acres of deforested land in the Weelaunee Forest; and
- WHEREAS:** Cop City would encompass shooting ranges, a helicopter pad, and a “tactical village” meant to mimic an Atlanta neighborhood for the purposes of simulating urban warfare and would be the largest such police training facility in the United States near a predominantly Black community; and
- WHEREAS:** This facility would enhance the militarization of not just the Atlanta Police Department, but any municipal, state or federal agency invited to train there; and
- WHEREAS:** The Somerville City Council actively supports the demilitarization of policing and recognizes the disproportionate violence that militarized policing has on people of color, disabled people, low-income folks, and other marginalized communities; and
- WHEREAS:** In a survey written by lender Cadence Bank, the Atlanta Police Foundation’s Program Manager answered that 43% of recruited trainees at the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center would be from out-of-state; and
- WHEREAS:** The Somerville City Council recognizes the critical need for municipalities to actively advance policies that combat climate change; and
- WHEREAS:** Atlanta forests annually remove roughly 19 million pounds of air pollutants, according to the Georgia Forestry Commission, while the Weelaunee Forest is one of the last unspoiled forested areas in the metro Atlanta area; and
- WHEREAS:** There has been a sustained effort to stop Cop City’s construction by a broad coalition of advocates that has testified before their elected officials, gathered over 100,000 signatures in opposition to said construction, as well as having camped in the Weelaunee Forest to prevent its destruction; and
- WHEREAS:** Advocates to stop Cop City have faced state-sponsored retaliation for exercising their First Amendment rights, including through the indictment of 61 activists earlier this month on Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) charges as well as the indictment of 42 activists on state domestic terrorism statutes, in efforts at lawfare slammed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Human Rights Watch, the National Lawyers Guild, and other civil and human rights organizations; and
- WHEREAS:** Unarmed activist Manuel “Tortuguita” Terán was shot 57 times and killed by Atlanta Police amidst a multi-agency raid of an encampment in the Weelaunee Forest meant to continue a proud tradition of environmentalists putting their bodies on the line to prevent deforestation; and
- WHEREAS:** Chicago, Baltimore, Tennessee, and Houston have already built or proposed “tactical villages” similar to the Center, indicating a growing and deeply concerning militarization of municipal police departments nation-wide; and

WHEREAS: The Somerville Police Department should not receive training from a program that violates constitutional or human rights or promotes the militarization of policing; **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council strongly opposes the destruction of the Weelaunee Forest and the building of the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center as gross violations of human rights; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council will strongly oppose the Somerville Police Department or the City of Somerville sending trainees to, accepting trainees from, participating in any collaborations with, or supporting in any other fashion the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: That the Somerville City Council urges Representative Ayanna Pressley and Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren to publicly condemn the destruction of the Weelaunee Forest and the proposed construction of the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center; **AND BE IT FURTHER**

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to the Atlanta City Council and Mayor Andre Dickens as well as to the offices of Representative Pressley as well as Senators Markey and Warren.