



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Legislative Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 30, 2026

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Scott at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 9:50 pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Davis, Mbah, Ewen-Campen, Strezo, and Scott), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

The committee entered recess at 7:55 pm and returned at 8:00 pm on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Davis, Mbah, Ewen-Campen, and Scott), and 1 absent (Councilor Strezo). Councilor Strezo joined the meeting at 8:04 pm.

Others present: Emily Wisdom – Director of Finance and Administration Police, Jay Piques – Assistant City Attorney, Matt Sirigu – Assistant City Attorney/Labor Counsel, Sean Sheehan – Police Captain, Vanessa Boulki – Senior Urban Forestry & Landscape Planner, Ellen Schacter – Director of the Office of Housing Stability, Michael Perronne – Police Captain, Amanda Nagim-Williams – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Joseph Theall – Housing Counsel, Cindy Amara – City Attorney, Madalyn Letellier – Assistant City Clerk, Legislative Services.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis, City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [26-0940](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Legislative Matters Committee Meeting of May 19, 2026.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0797](#)) Requesting approval of a Home Rule Petition to authorize the City of Somerville to regulate leases and tenancy at will agreements.

Director Ellen Shachter relayed how the legislation was brought to her attention from students living in the city. Director Shachter described the requirement for tenants to decide if they would like to re-sign an apartment far in advance and how it is unrealistic for students. The Director reviewed the referenced document describing the goal and issues aiming to be addressed in the language of the proposed Home Rule Petition (HRP), [Legislative Matters - 2026-06-30 Memo HRP Early Leasing \(with 26-0797\)](#).

David Van Riper, a Tufts student, spoke in favor of the HRP and to the experience of a student when deciding who to live with and when to sign a lease. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked why this HRP should be prioritized over others. Director Shacter shared there is similar language already at the State level that received a favorable recommendation and the more HRP's that get filed the more it can add to the movement. Councilor Mbah asked if this HRP only applies to students, Director Shachter shared based upon surveys done, it is not only a student issue, and the language is inclusive for all residents of the city. In response to Chair Scott Director Shachter stated the HRP does allow for a \$300 fine to be given out by the city, but further enforcement has not been discussed until approval for the HRP has been received from the Council. Director Shachter outlined a correction pointed out from Law that would need to be made to correct a definition of property in Section 1.

Councilor Scott moved to amend the ordinance to substitute the word "premise" for "property" in Section 1 Sub-Section 3. This motion was approved on a roll call of 5 in favor (Councilors Davis, Mbah, Ewen-Campen, Strezo, and Scott), 0 opposed.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED AS AMENDED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0882](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Chapter 7 and Section 1-11(b) of the Code of Ordinances to require property owners provide a notice of building sale to tenants.

Director Shachter reviewed the referenced document, Legislative Matters - 2026-06-30 Memo NBS Ordinance (with 26-0882), outlining the purpose of the amendment. Chair Scott asked about enforcement, Housing Council Joseph Theall stated that did not come up in discussions of working groups and the goal was to mirror the Housing Stabilization Notification Act. City Attorney Amara included the difference in the type of legislation submitted between a Home Rule Petition and an ordinance where the city cannot require a private force of action.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

4. Ordinance
(ID # [26-1023](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Wheeler, Councilor Mbah and Councilor Link

That Chapter 2, Article VIII, Division 1 of the Code of Ordinances be amended as detailed within.

Councilor Ewen-Campen reviewed the intent behind the ordinance is, to what is allowable, the city will not engage in business with activities as detailed within the ordinance. The Councilor stated the intent is not for a general boycott of businesses. The Councilor specifically called out Section C that states the Mayor to be the enforcer. Councilor Strezo stated that she does not support this ordinance and that it is discriminatory and illegal. In response to Councilor Strezo, City Attorney Amara stated an opinion was issued on a similar topic, not the specific language before the council, that such a petition could be challenged and would likely be found unlawful. Councilor Strezo asked if Councilor Ewen-Campen had considered what the ordinance would cost the city in legal expenses. Councilor Ewen-Campen shared his review of the legal opinions that have been shared and his aim to divert the language from foreign policy and more towards ethics and conduct. Councilor Mbah shared thoughts on the proposed amendment and to the ongoing turmoil happening within the community and the goal to show every life has equal value. Councilor Davis directed questions to Councilor Ewen-Campen regarding how he foresees the implementation of the ordinance being carried out, what is considered material, and for exemptions what enforcements the city is expected to take. Councilor Ewen-Campen began addressing ambiguity in the language and one potential solution is to make lists. He also discussed the desire to work with city offices in this process, and it will be iterative and is not intended to impede city departments from completing work or services. Further clarification from Councilor Davis was requested around the ambiguity of business involved with the U.S. government, Councilor Ewen-Campen recognized edits needed and requested the opportunity to edit the proposed language. Councilor Davis requested an opinion from the Law office about how the specific language proposed would engage with procurement law. In response to Chair Scott regarding questions about the non-inclusive list in Section C, City Attorney Amara stated the desire to research the question more and come back to the Council but at first glance the non-inclusive list should not present an issue. Chair Scott directed a request to Procurement and Finance to notify the council when an exemption is given to a business and how that decision is made.) In response to Councilor Davis Councilor Ewen-Campen addressed why Israel is named specifically in the ordinance. In response, Councilor Ewen-Campen added his thoughts about violations of human rights and the hesitancy to discuss viewpoints in public and the desire to be clear in the standard presented in the language.

Councilor Strezo made a motion that the Office of Strategy and Development and all city departments conduct an economic analysis on the potential impact to the city finances and the cost to the city of

enforcing the ordinance including investigating all potential service providers, the impact of the cities bond rating, in relation to the proposed ordinance amendment in chapter 2 article 7 division 1 of the code of ordinances. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Davis, Mbah, and Davis), 2 opposed (Councilors Ewen-Campen and Scott).

Councilor Mbah made a motion to reconsider the vote on the motion requesting the potential financial impacts to the city related to the ordinance. Reconsideration passed on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Ewen-Campen, and Scott), 2 opposed (Councilors Davis and Strezo).

Councilor Strezo made a motion that the Office of Strategy and Development and all city departments conduct an economic analysis on the potential impact to the city finances and the cost to the city of enforcing the ordinance including investigating all potential service providers, the impact of the cities bond rating, in relation to the proposed ordinance amendment in chapter 2 article 7 division 1 of the code of ordinances. The motion failed on a roll call vote of 2 in favor (Councilors Davis and Strezo), 3 opposed (Councilors Mbah, Ewen-Campen, and Scott).

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

5. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [26-0302](#))

Conveying the 2025 Surveillance Technology Annual Report.

This item was discussed with agenda item #26-0936.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [26-0936](#))

Conveying the updated 2025 Surveillance Technology Annual Report.

This item was discussed with agenda item #26-0302. Chair Scott repeated his request for the training materials regarding GreyKey and how the content captured is utilized and in summary training materials could not be obtained from the vendor. Assistant City Attorney Piques spoke to his involvement in requesting training materials that would not be provided from the parent company without clear explanation. Chair Scott stated this is the only concern with re-submission and the desire for transparency. Discussion ensued about the understanding of a private entity not wanting to release its training material and the hope for it to be received in the future.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0878](#)) Requesting approval of the Surveillance Technology Impact Report for the Smart Tree Inventory.

Planner Boukili reviewed the referenced document, [Legislative Matters - 2026-06-30 Somerville Tree Inventory Overview Presentation](#)). The technology is digital inventory that provides details on location, size, and management of public trees. Director Boukili made note that the intent is not to identify people, but they may have been captured as the vehicle drove around. In response to Councilor Davis, Director Boukili shared it is beyond the scope of the technology to wipe photos with people in them and there are over 80,000 to view so at this time it is unfeasible for staff to review.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0830](#)) Requesting approval of the Surveillance Technology Impact Report for CrimeTracer.

Councilor Ewen-Campen opened the discussion by asking if it is up to the discretion of the city to have CrimeTracer or if the city is legally bound to have the technology. Captain Michael Perrone stated one potential area may be mandated when background checks are done on potential new officers. He continued to share that the tool is valuable during investigations and gathering material. Discussion continued around the recognition that the tool is useful in daily operations but there are continued concerns around privacy and information sharing with federal entities and whether it is in fact a legal requirement. In response to Councilor Mbah, Captain Perrone stated the technology does have an audit function and it is monitored by supervisors, if there are violations sanctions would be given out at the department level and the person would likely lose access to the system.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

9. Public Communication (ID # [26-1006](#)) 89 registered voters submitting a petition requesting a public hearing regarding Police Body-Worn Cameras, pursuant to Section 2-11 of the City Charter.

This item was discussed with agenda items #26-1034, #26-0999, and

#26-1000.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

10. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [26-1034](#))

Chief of Police conveying information regarding item #26-0378, a request of the Mayor for acceptance of a grant for a body-worn camera program.

This item was discussed with agenda items #26-0999, 26-1006, and #26-100

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

11. Mayor's Request
(ID # [26-0999](#))

Requesting approval of the Surveillance Technology Impact Report for Body Worn Cameras.

This item was discussed with agenda items #26-1034, 26-1006, and #26-1000.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Strezo

NAY: Ward Six City Councilor Davis and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

12. Mayor's Request
(ID # [26-1000](#))

Requesting approval of the Technology-Specific Surveillance Use Policy for Body Worn Cameras.

Assistant City Attorney Matt Sirigu was present to discuss the two reports submitted, items #26-0999 and #26-1000, related to the city's goal to obtain body worn cameras for the police department. Assistant City Attorney Sirigu shared changes were made to the policy to clearly define goals, definitions, individual protection, use cases, and first amendment activity in public. The reports submitted tonight are required under the Surveillance Ordinance and would allow the administration to move forward with the program if approved. Councilor Davis shared feedback on the submissions and details of the process the council has taken up to this point. Inclusive of the many executive sessions that were held during the collective bargaining agreements and continued questions on access to footage and sharing an opinion that the policy is not ready to move forward at this time. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked a question associated with Number 7 in the report and the cost of the technology, and if the annual costs are \$300k. Finance Director Emily Wisdom shared the \$105k would be associated with the cost of the raises for the Superior Officers, if both unions were to agree the number would increase to \$215k total. The grant would award \$231k to implement first year costs and \$50k in year two towards renewal costs. Director Wisdom stated after the first year of implementation it is estimated around \$95k to continue the program and maintain the cameras which allow

the technology to be updated or replaced if damage occurred. Councilor Ewen-Campen expressed hesitancy to approve this item and grant in a year when layoffs happened and if there is extra spending it should be focused in other areas. In response to Councilor Mbah Director of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) Nagim-Williams stated that August 31 is the contract expiration and there is continuous communication with the state to inform them on where the city is on in the process, this grant will not be available in the future. Director of IGA shared if the Surveillance Technology Impact Report (STIR) is not accepted the cameras cannot be deployed until accepted by the Council. Chair Scott and Councilor Davis expressed their desire to continue to workshop the language before approval of reports and the desire to keep these items in committee for further discussion.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen and City Councilor At Large Strezo
NAY: Ward Six City Councilor Davis and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

13. Ordinance
(ID # [26-0522](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Link, Councilor Hardt, Councilor Scott and Councilor Clingan
Proposing an amendment to Section 2-6 of the Code of Ordinances, the Welcoming Communities Ordinance, to further enhance civil rights protections in Somerville.

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

14. Ordinance
(ID # [25-1762](#))

By Councilor Davis and Mayor Wilson
That the Code of Ordinances be amended to prohibit the use of tax-payer funds for self-promotion.

Councilor Davis relayed again this ordinance was done in partnership with former Councilor Wilson now Mayor Wilson. Language was edited to make it clear the intent was not to use tax-payer funds to re-name and post the Mayor's name in an egregious manner. Councilor Strezo requested an opinion from Law about any potential impacts this amendment could have to first amendment speech.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Ward Six City Councilor Davis, City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

Referenced Documents:

- Legislative Matters - 2026-06-30 Memo NBS Ordinance (with 26-0882)
- Legislative Matters - 2026-06-30 Memo HRP Early Leasing (with 26-0797)
- Legislative Matters - 2026-06-30 Somerville Tree Inventory Overview Presentation (with 26-0878)