



SOMERVILLE PEDESTRIAN AND TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PTAC) MAY 2023 MEETING MINUTES

MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE

Thursday, May 25th, 2023, 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Virtual GoToMeeting <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/539724445>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (872) 240-3212 **Access Code:** 539-724-445

Community Representatives:

*Ted Alexander
*Ginny Alverson
Caroline Bodager
Meredith Brown
*Thomas Coen
*Laura Evans
*Christopher Ferry
*Vitor Pamplona, *Vice-Chair*
*Zach Rosenberg
*Alessandra Seiter, *Chair*
Carole Voulgaris, *Secretary*

Ex Officio:

Beatriz Gómez Mouakad, *City Council - Ward 5*
Lauren Craik, *OSPCD Mobility*
*Justin Schreiber, *OSPCD Mobility*

*= present

Guests:

Karen Molloy, *Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets*
Khao Tong, *Somerville Times*
Jackie Stagnari, *Project Analyst, Parking Department, City of Somerville*
Suzanne Rinfret, *Director of Traffic and Parking, City of Somerville*

Acting Secretary: Zach Rosenberg

Call to order: 6:33

Agenda Item 1: Procedural Business (5 min)

1. Membership update: This is Thomas Coen's final meeting as he's moving out of state. Appreciates the hard work of the committee and was happy to be involved.
2. Roll call & intros
3. VOTE: April minutes
 - a. Alessandra motions to approve
 - b. Vitor seconds
 - c. Minutes are approved unanimously

Agenda Item 2: Subcommittee Updates (10 min)

1. Education and Engagement (Ted)
 - a. Walk on Western Washington Street last night to review changes and prep for upcoming construction
 - i. Great tour from Adam and Kate of Mobility
 - ii. Several of members of the public and a few folks from SBAC and PTAC
 - b. Next event is Carnaval on June 4th where a couple PTAC reps will be tabling with Mobility
 - i. Update 6/2/23: Carnaval is moved to its rain date on June 11
 - c. ArtBeat is also coming up on July 15. Not sure if we'll have enough folks available to table so please indicate whether you can by emailing Ted/Alessandra or filling out the tabling availability survey:
<https://forms.gle/Ny5jE5SvZVa3LPmZ6>
2. Engineering & Evaluation (Zach)
 - a. Did not meet this month
3. Policy and Enforcement (Ginny)
 - a. Did not meet this month

Agenda Item 3: Officer Elections (10 min)

1. No additional nominations put forward for positions
2. Alessandra nominates the current Officers
 - a. Chair: Alessandra Seiter
 - b. Vice Chair: Vitor Pamploma
 - c. Secretary: Carole Voulgaris
3. Alessandra motions to re-elect the current slate of officers for another year
 - a. Ginny, Christopher, and Ted second the motion
 - b. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote!

Agenda Item 4: Presentation & Discussion with Parking on Enforcement Processes (50 min)

1. Presentation by Suzanne Rinfret
 - a. Reviewed description of Parking's mission and duties
 - i. Serves residents, business, and visitor parking needs
 - b. Administration
 - i. Issues 20+ types of permits in person and online
 - ii. Issued 74,000+ permits in FY22
 - iii. Educates public on parking rules and regulations
 - iv. Manages ticket payments, appeals, and consideration requests
 1. Philosophy to work with the public to meet their needs rather than punishing them unnecessarily
 - v. Manages parking-related 311 requests
 - vi. Hosts special events
 - c. Enforcement
 - i. 29 Parking Control Officers (PCOs) in Somerville
 1. 2 supervisors, 14 daytime, 11 evening, 2 overnight

- ii. Role
 - 1. Enforce safety violations throughout the city: double parking, bus stops, accessible parking, fire hydrants/lanes, bike lanes, street cleaning, snow
 - a. All revenue generated through parking violations in accessible spots goes to the Commission for Persons with Disabilities
 - 2. Enforce timed and permit parking
 - 3. Issued 34,000 warnings and 120,000+ violations in FY22
- iii. Parking fun facts! Somerville was first in the Commonwealth to:
 - 1. Implement a citywide speed limit of 25 mph
 - 2. Utilize mobile parking apps
- iv. Piloted and planning to start implementing automated parking enforcement on a small scale
 - 1. Using an [MPS Safety Stick](#) to take a photo of license plates if a vehicle is obstructing a non-parking spot after 3 minutes
 - 2. Photo, license plate number, address of violation, and duration of violation are sent to Parking department for them to review before ticket is mailed to the violating driver
 - 3. Conducted a successful pilot with the Safety Stick at B-Fresh in Davis Square, catching 420 sessions of illegal parking with the longest session being 68 minutes
 - 4. There are some requirements about how quickly after a violation tickets must be issued, so the plan is to start small with Safety Stick use to ensure Parking doesn't get overwhelmed with review volume
 - a. Safety Sticks will likely be placed in one or two locations to start, including B-Fresh in Davis and another location based on volume of known parking violations
 - 5. Warning signs will be posted where Safety Sticks are in use to notify drivers that the area is under surveillance
- d. Maintenance
 - i. Deploys two-person sign and meter crew
 - 1. 16 surface log kiosks
 - 2. 130 smart meters
 - 3. 700 classic meters
 - ii. Responds to 311 work orders for signs and meters
 - 1. 311 requests are useful for targeted enforcement and maintenance issues. Suzanne encourages everyone to submit 311 requests reporting parking violations - even if PCOs can't enforce the specific violation, they will have a record of where violations tend to happen which is very helpful.
 - iii. Installs all new meters and signs
- e. Street Cleaning

- i. Happens twice each week on every street between April 1 and December 31
 - 1. Side street hours: 8am-12pm
 - 2. Major street hours: 12am-6am
 - ii. All vehicles must be removed during these hours
 - iii. We sweep this often because Somerville is the most densely populated city in the northeast. Sweeping is essential to maintain a clean environment and prevent catch basins from filling with debris.
 - f. Loading Zones
 - i. Can be used by vehicles with passenger plates and commercial plates for pickup and drop-off
 - 1. Passenger use: 5 minutes
 - 2. Commercial use: 20 minutes
 - g. Clear Corners
 - i. Under state law, it's illegal to park within 20 ft of an intersection
 - ii. In Somerville, it is also illegal to park within 20 ft of any crosswalk
 - iii. The City is working to add pavement markings to enforce this, creating better visibility and improving safety for pedestrians
 - h. Permits
 - i. No limit on resident parking permits
 - ii. Guest permits are limited to 2 per household
 - iii. Residents are not allowed to use a guest permit for their own vehicle
 - i. How to avoid and handle violations?
 - i. Sign up for 311 alerts for street sweeping reminders, snow emergency alerts, etc.
 - ii. Obtain a permit
 - iii. Read the parking signs
 - iv. Pay the meter
 - v. Don't let violations go unpaid
 - 1. If they go unpaid for long enough, the violator's license could be suspended
 - vi. Be kind to your neighbors
 - j. Common Misconceptions of the Parking Department
 - i. Parking doesn't tow vehicles, only the Police do
 - ii. Parking doesn't make the rules, they only enforce them
 - iii. Parking doesn't set permit pricing
 - iv. Parking doesn't paint pavement markings, that's Engineering
 - v. City does not paint curbs and it's illegal for residents to do so
 - vi. PCOs cannot cross children at school, only Crossing Guards can
 - vii. PCOs can only ticket fire lanes and hydrants on private ways
 - k. [Citywide Parking & Curb Use Study](#)
 - i. Conducted in 2021-2022
 - ii. Strategies that are currently in progress
 - 1. Expanding Parking's staff capacity to focus on curb management
 - 2. Implementing a curb prioritization framework

3. Increasing accessible parking
 4. Expanding loading zones
 5. Piloting automated enforcement technology
 6. Adding meters to popular parking spots to encourage turnover
1. The 5 Cs of Parking
 - i. Customer Service
 - ii. Collaboration
 - iii. Communication
 - iv. Consideration
 - v. Community
 2. Questions/Discussion
 1. Zach: Was there a surveillance technology review of the Safety Stick?
 - a. Suzanne: The review is currently in progress
 2. Ginny: What can Parking do to help with visitors with parking, especially those traveling from out of state?
 - a. Suzanne: Visitor permits are available and you can reach out to Parking for assistance
 3. Ted: I saw in a job posting that PCOs are required to own their own car and have a driver's license. Are these requirements still in effect?
 - a. Suzanne: Yes, these requirements are still in effect. PCOs often need to get across town quickly to respond to 311 requests and other immediate violations. We also prefer not to put PCOs on an enforcement route in a contained square because if they are in the same place every day, there is a risk of becoming too friendly with residents and not conducting appropriate enforcement.
 4. Alessandra: Why are we able to conduct automated enforcement on parked vehicles but not moving vehicles?
 - a. Suzanne: We had to change Massachusetts General Law to use the Safety Stick. Moving violations are under the Police's purview rather than Parking's.
 - b. Justin: There is also a difference because a human is reviewing each violation rather than a ticket automatically being sent by a computer.
 5. Alessandra: Where will the Safety Sticks be placed now that the pilot is over?
 - a. Suzanne: One will probably stay in front of B-Fresh, the other will be determined based on complaints and data
 6. Ted: Do we have a sense of how well the clear corners initiative is working? I've seen good results just walking around.
 - a. Suzanne: Agrees and thinks it's often about just educating and reminding people where they can and can't park. Parking may also be working on more effective sign use and placement since if there are too many signs in one place it can be confusing.
 7. Vitor: How effective is enforcement for 2-hour parking spots?
 - a. The 15-minute spots are easier because the PCO needs to chalk the vehicle and come back in over 15 minutes, which they can usually do in a single round.

8. Alessandra: Parking has some radar feedback signs. Where are they deployed and are they effective?
 - a. Suzanne: We have two types, solar and battery-operated. They are in various places around the city, including on Lowell Street. We're in the early stages of developing a policy on where and when to deploy these signs, based on data we've been collecting.
 - b. Christopher: On Lowell Street it might make sense to remove the sign now that the speed humps are installed.
 - c. Justin: The data we've been collecting on the signs is different than we've seen in other cities so we're working to understand why.
9. Ginny: Any thoughts on installing radar feedback signs on Highland Ave?
 - a. Justin: Decisions on specific locations are pending Parking's analysis of the signs' efficacy.
10. Alessandra: The Police requested funds to purchase a few radar feedback signs in a grant they were awarded by the State, just approved by City Council. Do we have a sense of why the Police want to deploy their own signs? Have they worked with Parking to implement them?
 - a. Suzanne: Are these radar speed guns or signs?
 - b. Alessandra: Signs. The grant application made specific reference to the fact that Parking already owned some.
 - c. Suzanne: I'm not aware of this and can check in with the Police since we often work with them closely.
11. Alessandra: Do we have a sense of how many tickets are issued for blocking sidewalks and other violations related to pedestrian infrastructure?
 - a. Suzanne: They're not one of the top three ticket types but we could get the committee a breakdown.

Agenda Item 5: Review Draft Letter on FY24 Budget Priorities (10 min)

1. Advocating for two funding priorities:
 - a. Planning for a North-South Transit Connector
 - b. Hiring a Curb Manager to help implement priorities from the Parking Study
 - c. Alessandra: "The hope with this letter is to focus on items that share a level of urgency with the streetscape projects already promised funding through the CIP and other sources, but may need more of a push to get on the docket. With the north-south connector, the hope is also to capitalize on the clear interest among some Councilors while advocating for a path forward that is most likely to be successful."
2. Vitor: I wonder if these are the things we'd consider as our top priorities?
 - a. Alessandra: Even if they're not necessarily the things we'd like to see happen most urgently in Somerville, they are things that aren't promised funding elsewhere. For example, the CIP already includes many streetscape and other infrastructure projects including sorely needed ones like the Highland Ave redesign. Advocating for the things already included in the letter gives us the opportunity to voice support for things that aren't as high-profile.

3. Christopher: Brainstorming here but should we ask for more Neighborways support? It seems like a lot of the existing ones are getting a little worn/shabby.
 - a. Alessandra (asking Justin): Is there already specific funding that goes towards Neighborways?
 - b. Justin: The City is currently in the process of refreshing paint for neighborways, which is covered by the Engineering budget. Current and upcoming projects also include Neighborway refreshes and expansions, including in the Pearl + 6 project and the Bike Network Plan.
4. Ted: Supporting the letter as is. These items aren't everything we want to prioritize, but they are timely.
5. Alessandra: Maybe we can do more engagement (walks, events) around Neighborways rather than including it in the budget letter. We've been talking with Kate about the possibility of doing some Neighborway-focused walks, especially focused on connecting schools with GLX stations.
 - a. Christopher: Supportive of this idea. We should make sure to include all schools in this effort rather than just public ones.
 - i. Ted: This was discussed a little bit on the Washington Street walk in the context of Mobility's work with the charter school on the corner of Webster and Washington.
6. Alessandra: Motion to send the letter to the Mayor and City Council
 - a. Christopher seconds
 - b. Motion unanimously approved by voice vote

Agenda Item 6: Other Business

1. Justin: Public hearing on the Bike Network Plan is happening on May 31 during the Traffic Commission meeting. Encourages everyone to attend and voice their views.

Action Items from Meeting:

1. Alessandra: Send letter on FY24 budget priorities to Mayor and City Council

Meeting ended: 7:44pm