



January 2025 Meeting Minutes

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

Meeting Information

Thursday, January 16, 2025, 6:30-8:00 PM

This meeting will be hybrid:

- **In-person meeting location:** Somerville Public Library, Central Library, 79 Highland Ave.
- **Zoom info to join remotely via computers, tablets, and smartphones:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89181225932?pwd=aWpoL2FtaUh3aGdVbHNRWUJmeDRNQOT09>

Passcode: 152274

Or join by phone:

Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 646 558 8656

Webinar ID: 891 8122 5932

Passcode: 152274

International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcVy69ROJG>

Members

* = present

1. *Ted Alexander
2. *Ginny Alverson
3. Caroline Bodager
4. *Meredith Brown
5. Laura Evans
6. *Christopher Ferry
7. Tim Gilman (leaving PTAC)
8. *Preston Gutelius
9. *Satoko Hirai (Comms)
10. *Brenda Marvin (Secretary)

11. *Steven Mulder
12. *Barbara Myers
13. *Bianca Norkunas
14. *Vitor Pamplona (Vice Chair)
15. Zach Rosenberg
16. *Alessandra Seiter (Chair)
17. *Robert Stanzel
18. Carole Voulgaris
19. Will Mbah (Ex Officio, City Council - At Large)
20. Katherine White (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)
21. Justin Schreiber (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)

Guests

1. Brad Rawson, *Director of Mobility, City of Somerville*
2. Lilly, *Transportation Planner, City of Somerville*
3. Mackenzie Webb, *Somerville resident*
4. Joel Paul, *Davis Square Neighborhood Council*
5. Allison, *Somerville resident*

Acting Secretary

Steve Mulder

Call to Order

6:35

Agenda

Procedural Business

1. Minutes approved without objection
2. Due to location conflicts we need to change locations for these meetings: community room at Boynton Yards (supports video conferencing), or Somerviva conference room in eastern Somerville (would require 5:45 start time)
 - a. Slight majority favor Boynton, we'll try that and see how it goes

Subcommittee Updates

1. Community Events: met Jan 8, debrief from tabling at Winter Farmers Market, productive conversation with community member on Spring Hill concerns; talked of more opportunities for public conversations such as coffee visits or office hours; planning for Union Square walk audit; advanced planning for tabling and other events for 2025
2. Design Review: no update
3. Special Projects: on hold

City Update

1. Parking & Curb Use Study

- a. Study of curb space real estate city owns and operates
- b. Brought in consulting firm, stood up community-based task force
- c. This is a plan, not formal city policy at this point
- d. Consultants created inventory of regulations for every available curb, made recommendations
- e. Materials available at somervillema.gov/parkingstudy
- f. Recommendations around:
 - i. Clarify curb management roles (internal)
 - ii. Implement curb prioritization framework to prioritize access by need
 - iii. Ensure adequate commercial/passenger loading access
 - iv. Implement design standards to reduce model conflicts and integrate curb
 - v. Procure management and enforcement technology (including automated enforcement cameras)

2. New Parking Minimums Zoning

- a. Continue zoning reform efforts. City Council resolution requested an update of parking requirements, including investigating removing remaining parking minimums outside of areas near transit
- b. New zoning amendment adopted in Dec, will take effect Feb 1: remove all parking minimums, simplify parking requirement table, reformatted all parking ratios, clarified commercial parking facility land use
- c. New amendment does not: remove existing off-street parking or prohibit creation of new parking, prevent parking from being created outside of transit areas, requirement all new developments to be car-free, provide no exceptions
- d. Hundreds of communities across America have implemented similar reforms
- e. Alessandra: Asked about relationship between City Council resolution (instigated investigation) and zoning amendment approval (approved Dec)
- f. Christopher: What was the history of Somerville parking minimums? Hasn't always been this way, zoning changes. Brad less familiar with detailed history; many regions reuse regulations from other areas, so early Somerville regulations weren't necessarily tailored to our community's needs
- g. Christopher: Was it coming for developments to get exceptions? Brad: recently, people seeking special permits to avoid having parking

3. Elm Street Parking Pilot

- a. Day St to Grove St curb access, follow up from June 2024 presentation to PTAC
- b. Acknowledging PTAC comment letter from July 2024
- c. No substantial update on this work; discussions with merchants continue, varying opinions
- d. Mobility working on 2025 work plan, no timeline currently

4. Participatory Budgeting Funded Bus Stop Improvements

- a. \$200K toward bus stop improvement: access to and condition of areas around stops in most heavily used corridors
- b. 4 locations selected, installation spring and summer
- c. Alessandra: Wash & Tufts which MBTA just updated, our plan is to add a shelter
- d. There's money for 1 more
- e. Steve: Maintenance? MBTA covers maintenance, damage. MBTA doesn't do snow removal. Brad will ask if this funding can include service/maintenance work.
- f. Round 2 participatory budgeting starting this spring.

Review PTAC 2024 Annual Report

1. Can cover this in Feb meeting

Committee Discussions: Enforcement & Snow Clearing

2. **Enforcement:** topic explored previously in PTAC, voiced as priority for 2025; needs more time for conversation, so conversation today focused on a process for having that conversation
3. Ideas shared:
 - a. Devote community meeting to standards on enforcement
 - b. Conduct more facilitated meeting format
 - c. Field a survey on these topics
 - d. Individual conversations with PTAC members
 - e. Conversations with buddy pairs
4. Ginny: Subcommittee previously existed on enforcement, this is an important topic and difficult to handle; suggest small group (ad hoc committee) conversation on what we might prioritize
5. Comment on usefulness of a survey to quickly gauge priorities, help focus; Meredith agrees, could show consensus or key differences easily
6. Alessandra motions for survey, will draft and work with officers; approved without objection
7. **Snow clearing:** Vitor drafted [comment letter](#) based on Dec snowstorm, prompted by sidewalk ice in front of houses; snow clearing of course is a city/private partnership
 - a. Problem of ice on private sidewalks 7 days after a storm
 - b. Need to define what good sidewalk clearing should look like
 - c. Importance of regulating ice in particular
 - d. Education is key part of any work on this
 - e. Importance of bus stop clearing
 - f. Idea of 24-hour timeframe to achieve 100% mobility after a storm
 - g. Requests committee to review draft
8. Comment: Businesses also do a poor job of snow clearing
9. Ginny: Hard topic, she thinks city should take over private clearing too; Somerville has large elderly and disabled population
10. Barbara: Supports idea of city taking it over; situation is often treacherous
11. Steve: Helpful to have a north star goal of 24-hour timeframe; the issue is complicated to it's useful to have a simple vision
12. Preston: Many people don't know what requirements are for snow clearing; landlords don't care and/or don't understand responsibility
13. Brad: will take this back for conversation; urges us to evaluate city performance based on previous commitments not necessarily ideals of what we'd like
14. Rob: What were processes and outcomes from other cities on this issue? Brad will explore
15. Rob: Praise for Path clearing
16. Ted: Different regulations for different storms could set a difficult precedent, hard standard to have in a law
17. Alessandra: Who is it useful to get this letter in front of?
18. Brad: Elected officials, senior management (DPW, Inspectional Services), finance and comms departments
19. Meredith: Preference for iterating on this with a small committee/group
20. Barbara: Agrees; perhaps more anecdotes from coming weekend snow
21. Ted: Agrees; some items are more aspirational and could be broken out
22. Vitor willing to run a meeting on this topic

Other Business / Public Comment

23. None

Final Items

Action Items from Meeting

1. Review annual report for Feb meeting

Meeting Ended

8:05