

# Somerville Commission for Women (SCW)

## Committee: Advocacy, Policy, Projects, & Planning (APPP)

Agenda: Thursday, November 13, 7pm

### Commission Members

Alex Barbat	Present
Dani Dees (she/they)	Present
Bobbi Van Gilder	Present
Jenn Harrington (she/her)	Present

### Guests

Katelin Firth	Present
Leonor Galindo	Present

### Meeting Summary

The Advocacy, Policy, Projects, & Planning (APPP) Committee discussed the following:

- Our next committee meetings are on December 9 and January 13 at 7pm.
- Bobbi moderated this month's meeting. We will be rotating this responsibility.
- We discussed the lack of data on women in Somerville, how it looks like research was done in the past, what other organizations have interesting data, and what our next steps are. Angie detailed the intensive and important process the Public Safety for All Community Survey went through. We propose that the SCW:
  - Request a survey. Write a letter to the city asking for data centered on women.
  - Research how much it would cost to hire a specialist to do study for us.
  - **SCW discussion followed by a vote:** Does the SCW want to proceed with asking the City for a survey focused on women's issues?
- While we wait for data, we can still commit to action. Depending on the outcome of Katelin's conversation with Councilor Strezo, with economic insecurity at a new height, we propose partnering with the Councilor on a period products drive. It was also suggested that this drive could be an opportunity to share important data on a particular women's topic: resources, sexual health, endometriosis, etc.
  - **SCW discussion followed by a vote:** (dependent on Katelin's conversation)  
Does the SCW want to proceed with a collaborative effort with Councilor Strezo

on a period products drive? Do we include important stats during the drive to inform?

- We propose that the SCW connect with women who ran in the 2025 election and host a workshop/info session for women who are interested in running for office ahead of the next election. We could reach out to Emerge MA for a potential collaboration. This project could be an opportunity to manage a long-term project.
  - **SCW discussion followed by a vote:** Does the SCW want to focus on encouraging women leaders to seek elected positions within the city by learning from those who have run in the past?
- There were other great ideas throughout the meeting, including a listening tour during councilors office hours.
- **SCW discussion followed by a vote:** The committee proposes Jenn as committee head.
- Next steps:
  - Katlin will be reaching out to Councilor Strezo.
  - The co-chairs and RSJ will be following up to see if there are ways we can partner/assist other committees in addressing ICE.
  - We will all be reviewing the research by other organizations and sharing insights at our next committee meeting.
  - Bobbi and Dani will be archiving the APPP folder, looking for good ideas and providing a summary of things we should think about moving forward.
  - The committee head will be sending agendas and minutes to SCW co-chairs and RSJ going forward.
  - **If anyone would like to join the committee or attend a future meeting as a guest, please email the committee head.**

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## Full Meeting

### Meeting Schedules

Let's schedule meetings for December 2025 and January 2026.

Tuesday, December 9, 2025, 7pm

January 13, 2026, 7pm

## Meeting Volunteer Moderator

We are rotating this responsibility. The moderator makes sure we address agenda topics and presents minutes at the next SCW meeting.

September 2025:	Jenn
October 2025:	No meeting
November 2025:	Bobbi
December 2025:	Dani
January 2026:	Jenn
February 2026	Bobbi

Alex bows out as moderator for this committee for balance.

## Somerville Women's Policy Advocacy

### Updates

- From APPP's September Agenda: "Bobbi and Dani will be reviewing the APPP Policy folder to gather information and archive documents."  
Work to come! How to access? What is our goal?  
Look for good ideas, and summarize (1-2 pages) things we should think about moving forward . An easy, accessible overview.  
Previously, due to quorum issues, not a lot of work was done. "This is brand new for everyone." What works best for this commission? This is up to you!
- In process. From APPP's September Agenda: "Jenn will schedule the next meeting and present the minutes at this meeting. We agreed to take turns reporting on minutes to the larger group so everyone has the opportunity to shine and to get to know each other!" Done!
- From APPP's September Agenda: "We will continue brainstorming policy topics that impact women in Somerville."
  - Advocacy (or policy)
  - Strong women's voices in Somerville.
  - ICE, know your rights
  - Food security
  - Economic justice
  - Partner with toy drive/food drive for holidays
  - Advocate for more money for certain things (e.g., how does Somerville allocate money for small business training for women?).
  - Maybe surveys or focus groups to learn what community wants/needs

- Attend councilors office hours? Listening tour
- \*Survey (PSFA) as example – about 13 hundred responses; data collected over the course of 4 months
  - Write a letter to the city asking for data? Request survey
  - How much would it cost to hire a specialist to do study for us?
- What is the human rights commission doing re ICE? Let's find out and see how we can help
- \*\*Period products – partner will Strezo? (Katelin will ask how we can join forces)
- Resources
  - From SCW co-chair Katelin Firth:
 

["CAAS' Community Needs Assessment](#) is from 2023, which is a decent starting point if no one raises other sources." (Page 77 – Top Needs Impacting People by Gender)
  - From SCW co-chair Alex Barbat:
 

Not Somerville-specific, but the National Network of Domestic Violence does an annual one-day survey of Domestic Violence programs' services and unmet needs. [Respond pointed me towards the Massachusetts data a couple of years ago – here's the most recent summary.](#)
  - [Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women Resources](#)
  - [Somerville 2025 Anti-Violence Taskforce Report](#)
  - CTA: Go over research in our free time

## Elections

- Discussion: We had an idea for being a part of the election process that we couldn't move forward with because the SCW meetings were canceled twice. Is there something we would like to do post-election?
- Connect with women who ran in the last election, workshop/info session for women who are interested in running for office ahead of the next election
- Emerge MA collaboration?
- From Jessie Ratey's "Closing Thoughts" email (she ran for School Committee, Ward 3):
 

"If you have ever considered a run for office, I will say it was harder than I expected and I cannot recommend it highly enough. Please get involved in a local campaign either as a candidate or committee volunteer. If you have questions, reach out. Our community, our country, our democracy needs you."
- From APPP's September Agenda:

- “We discussed recent policy topics impacting women in Somerville, focusing on the upcoming mayoral election and the lack of women running for office. We considered creating a document outlining where mayoral candidates stand on women's issues, without endorsing any particular candidate. The conversation also touched on the need for more women's engagement in political processes and the importance of addressing issues, like the lack of spaces in after-school programs, that deter women from taking on additional leadership roles.”

## Elect a Committee Head for APPP – Jenn!

*From SCW co-chairs:*

- This person will primarily be responsible for liaising with RSJ for submitting the agenda and scheduling the meeting; if you have questions about this role, let the SCW co-chairs know and they will work with you to shape it.
- Create an agenda with the other committee members.
- Send the agenda to SCW co-chairs along with the date/time of the meeting so they can forward to RSJ (remember it must be posted 48 hours in advance, so please send 3 days in advance)
- Immediately after the meeting, the committee head should send minutes to Leonor directly and cc this co-chair account; these meetings do not have to be recorded.

## General Items from Co-chairs

- Next SCW Meeting:  
Tuesday, November 18th, hybrid: Tufts Administration Building (TAB) located at 167 Holland Street or Zoom (co-chairs will share a link when it's available).
  - [RSVP for the meeting](#)
  - [Submit agenda items](#) by Tuesday, November 11th.
- Other reminders
  - Update your contact information in the [SCW Contact Info document](#).
- [Add meetings and events that people should be aware of.](#)
- [Review the SCW website](#) and let co-chairs know if you would like your name changed.
- If you are interested in a 1:1 meeting with the co-chairs, [please add your availability to this google doc](#) ([or schedule with them here](#)). Meetings are totally optional, but we'd like to get to know each of you as we were not involved in the recruiting process. We will add more time slots as needed.

## Items we did not have time to discuss

- Should we organize a commissioners survey to get ideas?  
From APPP's September Agenda: "If there are Commissioners who can not join APPP for whatever reason, what is the best process for them to engage with us about ideas, feedback, concerns, and other topics?"
- From APPP's September Agenda: "The group expressed hope for more participation from members who missed the last meeting, acknowledging the need for additional support given the current national challenges. We would like to know what is the maximum number of people allowed in a working group and we would love to have more commissioners join us!"
- Potential Research Projects:
  - Research of women who have held elected positions in Somerville in the past 20 (?) years
  - Would it be beneficial to have a working group research tea, inviting community members to participate in an actionable 1-3 hours where we brainstorm issues and gather data? Or, could we do one SCW-wide focused research project every quarter?
- We would like to know what the Commission thinks about creating a document outlining where mayoral candidates stand on women's issues, without endorsing any particular candidate. Related, although we did not specifically discuss this, it would also be good for us to think about how to spread the word when a women's issue is on a City Council or other public meeting agenda.

## Women's Health Advocacy Discussion

- Discussion: What if we proposed dropping Jenn's "Lecture: An Unusual Education Event" so she can shop the idea to other organizations and instead host a Women Storytelling Event or a Women Roundtable Event that addressed women's health and other social issues? Something that is "show, don't tell," in that we learn more from people saying, "you are not alone" than by just giving factual information. How does this sound? What can we brainstorm (in an ideal world)? And then, how can we refine the idea to make it actionable?
- From APPP's September Agenda: "We discussed the importance of women's health, particularly in light of recent federal policy changes. We focused on broader foundational health issues, including insurance access, primary care availability, and the impact of COVID-19 on the healthcare system. We noted that we have not personally seen any recent city announcements about vaccine encouragement. We touched on endometriosis awareness and education and the possibility of

collaborating with Boston's top endometriosis clinics to improve access and awareness."