



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

- Minutes approved without objection
- 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)
 - Slight majority favor Boynton, we'll try that and see how it goes

Subcommittee Updates

- 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
- Design Review: no update
- Special Projects: on hold

City Update

- Parking & Curb Use Study

- Study of curb space real estate city owns and operates
- Brought in consulting firm, stood up community-based task force
- This is a plan, not formal city policy at this point
- Consultants created inventory of regulations for every available curb, made recommendations
- Materials available at somervillema.gov/parkingstudy
- Recommendations around:
 - Clarify curb management roles (internal)
 - Implement curb prioritization framework to prioritize access by need
 - Ensure adequate commercial/passenger loading access
 - Implement design standards to reduce model conflicts and integrate curb
 - Procure management and enforcement technology (including automated enforcement cameras)
- New Parking Minimums Zoning
 - Continue zoning reform efforts. City Council resolution requested an update of parking requirements, including investigating removing remaining parking minimums outside of areas near transit
 - 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
 - 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
 - Hundreds of communities across America have implemented similar reforms
 - Alessandra: Asked about relationship between City Council resolution (instigated investigation) and zoning amendment approval (approved Dec)
 - 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
 - Christopher: Was it coming for developments to get exceptions? Brad: recently, people seeking special permits to avoid having parking
- Elm Street Parking Pilot
 - Day St to Grove St curb access, follow up from June 2024 presentation to PTAC
 - Acknowledging PTAC comment letter from July 2024
 - No substantial update on this work; discussions with merchants continue, varying opinions
 - Mobility working on 2025 work plan, no timeline currently
- Participatory Budgeting Funded Bus Stop Improvements
 - \$200K toward bus stop improvement: access to and condition of areas around stops in most heavily used corridors
 - 4 locations selected, installation spring and summer
 - Alessandra: Wash & Tufts which MBTA just updated, our plan is to add a shelter
 - There's money for 1 more
 - Steve: Maintenance? MBTA covers maintenance, damage. MBTA doesn't do snow removal. Brad will ask if this funding can include service/maintenance work.
 - Round 2 participatory budgeting starting this spring.

Review PTAC 2024 Annual Report

- Can cover this in Feb meeting

Committee Discussions: Enforcement & Snow Clearing

- **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
- Ideas shared:
 - Devote community meeting to standards on enforcement
 - Conduct more facilitated meeting format
 - Field a survey on these topics
 - Individual conversations with PTAC members
 - Conversations with buddy pairs
- 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
- Comment on usefulness of a survey to quickly gauge priorities, help focus; Meredith agrees, could show consensus or key differences easily
- Alessandra motions for survey, will draft and work with officers; approved without objection
- **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
 - Problem of ice on private sidewalks 7 days after a storm
 - Need to define what good sidewalk clearing should look like
 - Importance of regulating ice in particular
 - Education is key part of any work on this
 - Importance of bus stop clearing
 - Idea of 24-hour timeframe to achieve 100% mobility after a storm
 - Requests committee to review draft
- Comment: Businesses also do a poor job of snow clearing
- Ginny: Hard topic, she thinks city should take over private clearing too; Somerville has large elderly and disabled population
- Barbara: Supports idea of city taking it over; situation is often treacherous
- 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
- Preston: Many people don't know what requirements are for snow clearing; landlords don't care and/or don't understand responsibility
- 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
- Rob: What were processes and outcomes from other cities on this issue? Brad will explore
- Rob: Praise for Path clearing
- Ted: Different regulations for different storms could set a difficult precedent, hard standard to have in a law
- Alessandra: Who is it useful to get this letter in front of?
- Brad: Elected officials, senior management (DPW, Inspectional Services), finance and comms departments
- Meredith: Preference for iterating on this with a small committee/group
- Barbara: Agrees; perhaps more anecdotes from coming weekend snow
- Ted: Agrees; some items are more aspirational and could be broken out
- Vitor willing to run a meeting on this topic

Other Business / Public Comment

- None

Final Items

Action Items from Meeting

- Review annual report for Feb meeting

Meeting Ended

8:05