



Somerville Human Rights Commission

Administration Subcommittee

Monthly Meeting

Proposed Meeting Minutes

Subcommittee Members:

Elyse Best – Chair

Primrose Chakera

Salma Kazmi

Brian Sokol

Date: February 9th, 2026

Time: 5:00 P.M.

Location: Virtual

Note taker: Elyse Best

Roll Call: Members present: Elyse Best, Salma Kazmi, Brian Sokol, Primrose Chareka.
Staff present: Elijah Booker (Racial and Social Justice Department).

Quorum: The subcommittee had quorum.

Attendance:

Members Present:

- Elyse Best
- Salma Kazmi
- Primrose Chakera
- Brian Sokol

Staff Present: Elijah Booker (Department of Racial and Social Justice, RSJ)

Special guests/Speakers: None

Members Absent: None

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 P.M. by Elyse Best.

Announcements:

The chair acknowledged and noted that:

- Attendance and quorum
- Elyse confirmed as the notetaker

- There were no minutes to approve because there had not been a recent meetingThe meeting would be brief
- Some agenda topics could not be resolved until after a meeting with the Mayor
- There had been no correspondence yet from RSJ regarding some of these topics

Discussion Items:

Topic: Role of the Administration Subcommittee

Discussion included:

- The administration subcommittee is responsible for organization, structure, and coordination.
- Subcommittee chairs should manage their own agendas and minutes.
- Alignment with ordinances and bylaws still needs clarification.
- The subcommittee should help keep the commission functioning effectively.

Purpose of the Administration Subcommittee & Empowering Subcommittees

Speakers: Elyse Best, Salma Kazmi

Key points:

- Administration's role is structural and organizational
- Salma suggested:
 - empowering subcommittees
 - clearer goals and expectations
 - monthly meeting cadence
 - improved reporting

Topic: Templates and Tools

Onboarding Document and Expectations for Commissioners

Speakers: Salma Kazmi, Elyse Best, Primrose Chareka

Key points:

- Salma described the onboarding document:
 - history and mission
 - responsibilities
 - subcommittee structure
 - expectations
- Discussion about cohesion across subcommittees
- Discussion of reporting expectations

Topic: Meetings with Subcommittee Chairs

Elyse Best suggested:

- Holding periodic check-ins with subcommittee chairs to review progress and goals.

General agreement was expressed.

Topic: Onboarding Document

Salma Kazmi presented a draft onboarding document including:

- Commission background and mission
- Responsibilities of commissioners and chairs
- Subcommittee expectations
- Templates and processes
- Demographic and structural information

The document will be circulated for feedback.

Topic: Expectations for Subcommittee Reporting

Primrose Chareka suggested:

- Chairs should provide summaries of work, timelines, and progress.

Agreement was expressed.

Topic: Minutes, Attendance, and Posting Requirements

Speakers: Elyse Best, Primrose Chareka, Salma Kazmi

Key points:

- Minutes must be written and posted
- Attendance must be tracked
- Spreadsheets exist but are not always updated
- Chairs should maintain records
- Primrose offered to help support subcommittee chairs

Topic: Supporting Subcommittee Chairs

Primrose Chareka offered:

- To help follow up with subcommittee chairs.
- To assist with agenda and minutes processes during early implementation.

Agreement was expressed that this support would be helpful.

Topic: Commissioner Responsibilities and Attendance

Discussion included:

- Attendance expectations and ordinance requirements.
- Standards for responsiveness and participation.
- The ordinance allows removal after three unexcused absences.

Agreement that expectations should be clarified and communicated.

Topic: Excused vs. Unexcused Absences

Brian Sokol suggested:

- Excused absences could be defined as notifying in advance.

Primrose Chareka suggested:

- Ideally 24–48 hours notice for quorum planning.

Agreement that clearer definitions may be needed.

Topic: Attendance Expectations for Subcommittees

Discussion included:

- Whether attendance rules should apply to subcommittees.
- Possible standards similar to main meetings.
- Need to gather data before finalizing policies.

Topic: Engagement and Participation

Discussion included:

- Attendance affects morale and productivity.
- Participation is part of commissioner responsibilities.
- Communication issues were noted in some subcommittees.

Actions Taken:

- Onboarding document to be circulated for feedback.
- Templates and guidance to be developed and shared.
- Attendance expectations to be clarified.
- Subcommittee chairs to maintain attendance and provide updates.

Equity, Access, or Community Considerations:

Discussion acknowledged:

- The importance of commissioner engagement to ensure effective human rights work.
- The need for equitable participation and accountability across subcommittees.

Action Items/ Next Steps:

- Circulate onboarding document — Salma Kazmi
- Provide feedback on onboarding document — All commissioners
- Support subcommittee chairs with agendas and minutes templates — Primrose Chareka
- Continuing attendance expectations — Administration Subcommittee
- Share templates and guidance materials — Administration Subcommittee

Items to Report to the Full Commission:

- Development of onboarding materials
- Attendance expectations under review – discuss expectations
- Templates for agendas and minutes
- Need for consistent subcommittee reporting and meetings

Accountability:

About **two-thirds of the meeting** focused on:

- structure
- expectations
- attendance
- onboarding

Final Discussion:

Key points:

- Continued discussion of communication and engagement

Adjournment:

- The meeting adjourned at 5:38 P.M.
- Meeting Duration: Approximately 36 minutes

Next Meeting:

Monday, March 16, 2026 – 5:00 PM

(Regular meeting – 3rd Monday)

Prepared by:

Elyse Best, Chair of Administration Subcommittee