



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, July 8, 2026
6:00p.m.

Staff Liaison

Brendan Salisbury, Legislative and Policy Analyst

Commission Members

Brenna Broderick

Jesse Clingan

Chris Dwan

Courtney Henderson

Derrick Rice

The meeting was held via Zoom. Chair Chris Dwan convened the meeting at 6:00p.m.

Others present: Brendan Salisbury, Legislative and Policy Analyst

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1. Call of the Roll

Analyst Salisbury called the roll for attendance. Responses were as follows:

Liaison Broderick:	Present
Councilor Clingan:	Absent
Chris Dwan:	Present
Clerk Henderson	Present
Derrick Rice:	Present

With four members in attendance there was a quorum and the meeting was called to order.
Councilor Clingan joined the meeting at 6:02p.m.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

2.1. Committee logistics and standards

Chair Dwan demonstrated for the public how to view meeting events on the city calendar and review the documents associated with those meetings. He also explained that he is maintaining a document that he referred to as “Chair’s Notes” that he plans to attach to meetings, which he described as a resource for the public and members of the committee to track the committee’s progress.

Chair Dwan requested an update on the sharing of documents discussed in previous meetings, and Analyst Salisbury shared the process for document publication and explained that limited staff capacity may introduce delays in posting.

Chair Dwan stated that he planned to implement a “triaging” approach to addressing multiple-member bodies, and invited members of the committee to submit bodies that they wish to discuss at an upcoming meeting, including whether they believe that the disposition of those bodies is obvious or if they merit discussion. Vice Chair Rice requested that the chair clarify whether this meant that the committee was moving away from a model of receiving a presentation at a meeting, and then discussing the bodies presented on at a subsequent meeting. Analyst Salisbury shared that if members of the committee wish, they can request a presentation on particular bodies be made, and he will make that presentation. Vice Chair Rice stated that he is amenable to the new process, but wished to hear from the other members of the committee.



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, July 8, 2026
6:00p.m.

Councilor Clingan and Clerk Henderson voiced their agreement with the new process. Vice Chair Rice expressed disappointment that the process of review will not be as structured and thorough as he had hoped, and his hope that the report will include an explanation of the limitations faced by the body. Liaison Broderick asked whether the transcripts of interviews with staff liaisons would be made available to members of the committee, Analyst Salisbury responded that staff had been told that transcripts would not be shared in their raw form to encourage candor, but that if members of the committee have questions about specific information that was surfaced by interviews he is happy to work with them to get them answers.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

3.1. Resident concerns

Chair Dwan opened the floor for participation by attendees in the audience. Seeing no request to speak, Chair Dwan closed the public comment portion of the meeting.

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

4.1. Bodies pending recommendation

Chair Dwan expressed an intent to take no action on the Urban Design Commission. Councilor Clingan asked if the Urban Design Commission was written into the Zoning Ordinances. Chair Dwan indicated that it was and clarified that implementation of the committee's recommendations would require amendments to the Code of Ordinances or Zoning Ordinances, or potentially even a home rule petition. Councilor Clingan expressed his desire to maintain the Urban Design Commission as it stands. Vice Chair Rice echoed that sentiment and expressed general concerns about vacancies and holdover appointments on the Urban Design Commission and other bodies. Analyst Salisbury explained that the City Charter governs holdover appointments, and that in some cases long-serving members of bodies remain on the body to preserve institutional knowledge. Liaison Broderick acknowledged that there is significant appetite in the mayor's administration to address the process of appointing members to multiple-member bodies, and invited Vice Chair Rice to have a meeting with her regarding the appointments process. Chair Dwan noted that for certain bodies that require particular expertise, it is possible that there are not enough residents in the city with that expertise, and so it would make sense to have the same members over a long period of service.

There was a discussion about the committee's scope, and whether "ability of the administration to fill appointments to bodies" includes a review of an administration's appointment practices and willingness to fill vacant seats on a body, rather than being limited only to capacity, due to limitations in available expertise or interest. Chair Dwan suggested that the question should be considered offline, or potentially at a future meeting.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1. Presentation by Staff on Bicycle Advisory Committee

Analyst Salisbury shared a presentation on the Bicycle Advisory Committee. The presentation is available online.

5.2. Discussion of potential consolidation of:

- **Bicycle Advisory Committee**
- **Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee**



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, July 8, 2026
6:00p.m.

Chair Dwan stated that he had selected these two bodies as they both advise the Mobility Department, and that one is not defined in ordinance and evolved from the work of a working group. He shared that staff had indicated that they are comfortable with a two-committee model, that each provides distinct subject matter expertise, and both committees justify the staff time invested in them. Chair Dwan shared that his inclination was to recommend that they remain separate, and recommend formally establishing the Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee. Clerk Henderson agreed, noting the bodies' distinct functions. Councilor Clingan expressed that he did not feel strongly either way, but had no issue keeping them separate.

Chair Dwan expressed that he felt that the role of the committee is to reduce redundancies and address the unmanageable number of multiple-member bodies in the city. He shared that he is conflicted, as the decision to retain both committees may be an over commitment of resources. Councilor Clingan reiterated that he had no issue with keeping the bodies separate. Clerk Henderson clarified that she also does not feel strongly either way. Chair Dwan stated that after further consideration he had decided to lean toward combination. He suggested that the bodies might benefit from meeting together more regularly as a singular body, with sub-quorum working groups focused on specific subject matters. Councilor Clingan agreed and suggested that this could expand the focus of both groups and improve perceptions of equity in the bodies' work. Chair Dwan moved to recommend to consolidate the Bicycle Advisory Committee and the Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee, and establish them as the Mobility Advisory Committee. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of three in favor (Clingan, Henderson, Dwan), two absent (Broderick, Rice), and none opposed.

5.3. Discussion of potential consolidation of:

- **Human Rights Commission**
- **Commission for Persons with Disabilities**
- **Women's Commission**
- **Fair Housing Commission**
- **Council for Aging Persons**

Chair Dwan stated that each of the bodies lack a clear department to advise within the city, unlike the previous two bodies discussed that explicitly advise the Mobility Department. Chair Dwan indicated that he intended this to be the beginning of the conversation, and intended to discuss how the body should consider making a recommendation. He noted that the Women's Commission and the Human Rights Commission have had difficulties meeting quorum, and that there has been public friction between the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and city staff. Chair Dwan noted that he included the Fair Housing Commission and the Council for Aging Persons as he views them as sharing similar function, purpose, and challenges with the others.

Chair Dwan shared that he believes that each of these bodies serves an "ombudsman" function to receive complaints and investigate, and in some cases issue subpoenas. He clarified that he is not saying that these bodies should be consolidated, or that any of them should be dissolved, but that because of their similar functions it is important to have a



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, July 8, 2026
6:00p.m.

conversation about them. Councilor Clingan expressed agreement with the idea that there is redundancy between some of the bodies, specifically citing the Human Rights Commission and Women's Commission as examples. He noted that he recognizes the importance of Women's Issues and the value of there being a separate body to address them, but that consolidation with the Human Rights Commission may still make sense. There was discussion about whether the Council for Aging Persons and the Council on Aging were separate bodies, it was determined that they were the same body.

Chair Dwan reiterated that the identity advocacy bodies and the Fair Housing Commission all serve functions that are similar to or would fall under the function of the Human Rights Commission, based on the text of each body's enabling legislation. Councilor Clingan expressed that he felt that some of the bodies were outdated and arose from a desire for the government to have power to take action to address the needs of these constituencies. He noted that conversations about these bodies tend to have an expectation that they have the ability to take practical action, which is not always the case.

Analyst Salisbury pointed to Boston's example, where there is significant staff support for the functions of its Human Rights Commission, and its Fair Housing Commission which serves as a quasi-judicial body. He noted that the committee's discussion on the consolidation of these bodies should include consideration of what additional steps might be necessary to grant the consolidated body the authority to act in an ombudsman role.

Chair Dwan asked whether to include the Wage Theft Advisory Committee in future discussion for consolidation under the Human Rights Commission. Councilor Clingan voiced his disagreement with that proposal, sharing that he believes the Wage Theft Advisory Committee has not yet had the opportunity to establish itself and demonstrate whether it can accomplish its function. He noted that the enabling legislation for the Women's Commission mentions an executive director, a position that has never been established by the city, and that it is not clear in general which staff supports some of these bodies with the dissolution of the Racial and Social Justice Department.

Chair Dwan acknowledged that there is a specific problem that each of these bodies is intended to address, but questioned whether the commissions would effectively address those problems and whether it is a practical application of city resources to have multiple commissions with narrow scopes focused on particular groups. He further questioned whether this approach deprived the bodies of resources that may be more available if consolidated into a single body. Councilor Clingan agreed, but wondered about the legality of proceeding with that course of action. Chair Dwan noted that actions of the City Council can generally be rescinded or repealed by the City Council. Analyst Salisbury confirmed Chair Dwan's understanding, but noted that with local option bodies, established by accepting provisions of the Massachusetts General Laws, the city may not be able to create analogous bodies that fulfill the same functions or have the same powers as those granted by state law.

Councilor Clingan stated, for the record, that each of the bodies should stand. Clerk Henderson expressed her general agreement, stating that she feels there are too many



City of Somerville

Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 8, 2026

6:00p.m.

specialized areas that each body focuses on that might be lost if the bodies were consolidated. Chair Dwan noted that there is space in the city for advocacy groups outside of government. He asked the committee members to consider whether the constituencies addressed by the bodies are best served by having them as a commission within the city or whether another model would be better, especially considering the potential for a future mayor to neglect the bodies. Chair Dwan expressed his intent to continue this discussion at a future meeting.

5.4. Discussion of potential dissolution of:

- **Ethics Commission**

Chair Dwan noted that the Ethics Commission does not appear to have met since 2015. Councilor Clingan shared that he believes the Ethics Commission was created to combat patronage, but that this function seems better left to the Human Resources Department and the state Ethics Commission. He expressed that he believes the body is outdated and should be dissolved. Clerk Henderson agreed that the body largely duplicates the functions of the state Ethics Commission and that the body should be dissolved. Chair Dwan moved to recommend the dissolution of the Ethics Commission. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of three in favor (Clingan, Henderson, Dwan), two absent (Broderick, Rice), and none opposed.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Dwan moved to adjourn at 7:46p.m. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of three in favor (Clingan, Henderson, Dwan), two absent (Broderick, Rice), and none opposed.