



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 5, 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.

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1. Call of the Roll

Chair Dwan 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.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

2.1. Committee logistics and standards

Chair Dwan mentioned that he would be unavailable for the next meeting of the body and that he would coordinate with Analyst Salisbury about scheduling.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

3.1. Resident concerns

Chair Dwan opened the floor for participation by attendees in the audience. Elyse Best, a Ward 3 Somerville resident and co-chair of the Human Rights Commission announced her presence but made no comment. Holly Simione, a Ward 4 Somerville resident and chair of the Commission for Persons with Disabilities stated that she was attending as a resident interested in the work that the committee was doing. Seeing no further request to speak, Chair Dwan closed the public comment portion of the meeting, but encouraged members of the public to raise their hand and request to be recognized throughout the meeting if they felt they had something to contribute. Later in the meeting, Holly Simione asked whether it was the intent of the chair to discuss the bodies listed on the agenda under “unfinished business”. Chair Dwan summarized the discussion of those bodies from the previous meeting and stated that he, personally, is not ready to continue those conversations in this meeting.

3.2. Public comment by Dennis Fischman

Chair Dwan stated that he felt the written comments received by the committee spoke for themselves and he did not intend to discuss them. Vice Chair Rice noted that the comments were not attached to the meeting and were therefore not visible to the public. Chair Dwan



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 5, 2026
6:00p.m.

acknowledged that it was his understanding that staff capacity was more limited than usual but that the documents would be attached in the future.

3.3. Public comment by Rona Fischman

4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

4.1. Bodies pending recommendation

Chair Dwan expressed an intent to proceed to new business without discussing the previously discussed bodies still pending recommendation, feeling that more discussion was necessary before he was ready to deliberate, and noting the absence of staff liaison Analyst Salisbury, and committee member Councilor Clingan. Chair Dwan stated that he had included the bodies on the previous agenda to begin the conversation, and that he is not yet done speaking with stakeholders about the and not ready to continue deliberation.

Later in the meeting, Chair Dwan returned to the bodies pending recommendation and requested to hear from members of the public on the subject. Elyse Best stated that she would prefer to submit her comments in writing. Chair Dwan also stated she could speak to him directly outside of the meeting. Holly Simione noted that the Commission for Persons with Disabilities was created by Massachusetts General Law and stated that the role as defined by statute should be the focus of the committee's consideration, not the interpretation of it listed on the city's website. She described some of the functions of the body, and expressed disappointment that there was no opportunity to provide feedback prior to this point. She noted that while there is overlap with the Human Rights Commission in terms of addressing the needs of people with disabilities, the work of the bodies is distinct.

Vice Chair Rice noted previous conversations about the limitations of the work that the committee can do, and noted that not sending a questionnaire to commissioners was a decision made due to some of those limitations. He stated that he is actively seeking feedback from stakeholders in the work of the committee, and reiterated his disappointment that the final report of the committee will likely be less well-informed than he would have hoped.

Elyse Best noted that the Human Rights Commission recently released and published its annual human rights report and that it would be in circulation at the library in September, and agreed with Holly Simione that while there is overlap between the work of their bodies, their focus is distinct.

Liaison Broderick clarified that from her understanding the discussion of potential consolidation did not emerge out of an understanding that the relevant bodies were not impactful or the bodies were not effective, and that the discussion of the recommendation was driven by an analysis of the structural similarities and potential overlap. Chair Dwan agreed with that assessment and shared his understanding of the committee's function as more than simply cleaning up the list of multiple-member bodies.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1. Discussion of potential retention of:

- **Affordable Housing Trust Board**



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 5, 2026
6:00p.m.

- **Community Preservation Committee**
- **Conservation Commission**
- **Board of Election Commissioners**
- **Condominium Review Board**
- **Historic Preservation Commission**
- **Memorialization Committee**
- **Urban Forestry Committee**

Chair Dwan noted that the Affordable Housing Trust Board is a local option body, and described the body's enabling legislation, makeup, and function. He suggested that it is a body that should be retained. Clerk Henderson noted that the body does meet regularly and routinely produces reports. She agreed that the body should be retained. Vice Chair Rice requested clarity on the categories of bodies that the committee is reviewing. Liaison Broderick distinguished between a working group, advisory group, and adjudicatory body. Chair Dwan clarified that an adjudicatory body is one whose decisions are binding, whereas an advisory body produces recommendations that are not binding. Vice Chair Rice communicated his understanding that the Affordable Housing Trust Board has authority to act, rather than simply provide advice. Chair Dwan agreed and also noted his observation that city resources tend to be focused on the bodies that have binding authority. Liaison Broderick requested clarification on whether the intent of discussion was focused on retention, noting that she had heard no reason to recommend any other disposition. Chair Dwan moved to recommend retaining the Affordable Housing Trust Board. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of four in favor (Broderick, Henderson, Rice, Dwan), one absent (Clingan), and none opposed.

Chair Dwan noted that the Community Preservation Committee is a local option body, and that like the Affordable Housing Trust Board, the Community Preservation Committee has the authority to manage and direct funds. Chair Dwan described the body's enabling legislation, makeup, and functions. Vice Chair Rice requested clarification regarding the funds that the Community Preservation Committee oversees, and Chair Dwan clarified that they are funds from a tax surcharge under the Community Preservation Act. Liaison Broderick shared that the funds sometimes go toward historic preservation or general community enrichment applications, but that the majority are devoted to the Affordable Housing Trust. Vice Chair Rice stated his understanding about the limits of the authority of the Community Preservation Committee, and that their decisions could be overruled. Chair Dwan stated that was his understanding as well and distinguished the Community Preservation Committee from a body like the Licensing Commission. Liaison Broderick agreed, further clarifying that she views the Community Preservation Committee as a "direct" working body, that produces strong recommendations and reviews Community Preservation Act funding applications as a body, rather than simply providing advice. Following additional discussion on the delineation between an advisory and working body, Chair Dwan moved to recommend retaining the Community Preservation Committee. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of four in favor (Broderick, Henderson, Rice, Dwan), one absent (Clingan), and none opposed.

Chair Dwan noted that the Conservation Commission is a local option body and described the body's enabling legislation, makeup, and function. He stated that he attempted to communicate with staff regarding the purpose of the body, but the staff member is on vacation, and he



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 5, 2026
6:00p.m.

intended to follow up. He stated that his research does not reveal a record of impactful decisions by the body, and that they mostly seem to be involved with the management of community gardens. He noted a lack of posted minutes for the body. Liaison Broderick stated that she felt the committee would benefit from learning more about the body before deliberating, and that she is apprehensive about using posting of minutes as a metric for deliberation. Vice Chair Rice voiced general agreement with the desire to learn more about the body before proceeding. Vice Chair Rice noted that the Conservation Commission does not have enabling legislation in the Code of Ordinances and relies entirely on Massachusetts General Laws, and stated that he would be interested in discussing whether an ordinance further clarifying the body's role and functions would be appropriate. Chair Dwan agreed that more information would be helpful to assist the committee's deliberation. Vice Chair Rice requested information about the existence of a passive outdoor recreation plan and whether the existence of the Conservation Commission is necessary to exercise the city's power of eminent domain. Liaison Broderick noted that if the purpose of the committee is to reduce the number of bodies for the sake of efficiency, it would behoove the committee to ask staff whether their work assisting the body prevents them from accomplishing their other duties. Chair Dwan suggested that no action be taken on the body pending further information from staff.

Chair Dwan noted that the Board of Election Commissioners is unique in its makeup and expressed confusion about the terms of the members. Liaison Broderick clarified that while she is not sure of the terms, she could confirm that the members' terms are not coterminous with the mayor's. Chair Dwan indicated that he believes the work of the body is important and has never heard a complaint about them, but that he lacks experience with the body. Vice Chair Rice expressed a desire to learn more about the work of the Board of Election Commissioners and how it is distinct from the work of the Elections Department, but did note that there is a stipend for members of the body and wondered if discussion of stipends was within the scope of the committee's review. Liaison Broderick suggested that it would be helpful to include in the final report a recommendation about the standardization of stipends and how it is decided which bodies receive them. She clarified that the work of the Board of Election Commissioners in part includes the verification of election results, but agreed that more information from staff would be helpful for deliberation. Chair Dwan agreed that more information would be helpful, and that a conversation regarding stipends may be in order. He suggested that no action be taken on the body pending further information from staff.

Chair Dwan described the purpose, makeup, and function of the Condominium Review Board and noted that he believes it to be an adjudicatory body that makes standalone decisions that are not subject to review by another body. He indicated his inclination to retain the body. Vice Chair Rice agreed with his analysis and noted that reviewing such a new body is likely not the best use of the committee's time. Chair Dwan moved to recommend retaining the Condominium Review Board. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of four in favor (Broderick, Henderson, Rice, Dwan), one absent (Clingan), and none opposed.

Chair Dwan described the enabling legislation, makeup, and function of the Historic Preservation Commission. He asked if seats designated for residents were currently vacant, and Liaison Broderick stated that she believed they were but would confirm. Chair Dwan noted that the body is necessary for the function of historic preservation in the city as defined by ordinance.



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 5, 2026
6:00p.m.

He suggested that the body would likely benefit from advice from other bodies, noting that other bodies may have tension between accelerating or slowing action, but this body deals almost exclusively in slowing it. He reiterated that he sees no way to dissolve the body without substantially revising zoning, and suggested that the committee could either request further information or simply recommend to retain, indicating that he would prefer to recommend to retain. Vice Chair Rice voiced his inclination to retain, and also noted confusion about the lack of consistency of structure for bodies, and expressed interest in discussing how some bodies with more unusual structures function and whether those unusual structures are necessary. Liaison Broderick voiced her agreement and further noted that reserving seats for members with vocational and professional qualifications introduces barriers to making appointments. Chair Dwan noted his experience with the Urban Forestry Commission and difficulty filling seats with vocation requirements on that body. Vice Chair Rice suggested that the report should include a delineation of the types of bodies and their authority, and describe the most common structures for those bodies within the report. Liaison Broderick suggested that while the committee is conducting its review, it may be valuable to make particular note of bodies that generated substantial confusion for the committee, and also investigate whether vocational or professional requirements for appointment have caused substantial difficulty filling seats on bodies where they are present. Chair Dwan moved to recommend retaining the Historic Preservation Commission. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of three in favor (Broderick, Rice, Dwan), two absent (Clingan, Henderson), and none opposed.

Chair Dwan described the enabling legislation, makeup, and function of the Memorialization Committee. He expressed that the work of the committee seems valuable, and that the committee is doing it well. He suggested that there may be value in representation from other constituencies on the body, but wondered if such a recommendation was within the committee's scope. Vice Chair Rice noted that the purpose of the body seems to be to prevent memorialization from becoming a political bargaining chip, and that if the process can be accomplished by members of the community without significant expenditure of resources by the city it would be wasteful to recommend dissolving the body. However, he noted that maintaining appointments to bodies is a resource intensive process and wondered if there might be another means of accomplishing the same objective. Liaison Broderick noted that the body is less resource intensive because it is only engaged when there is a specific need. Vice Chair Rice noted that many seats on the body are representatives or designees from other bodies, and that only two seats require appointments from the community and that may resolve concerns about keeping up with appointments. Chair Dwan agreed and moved to recommend retaining the Memorialization Committee. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of three in favor (Broderick, Rice, Dwan), two absent (Clingan, Henderson), and none opposed.

Chair Dwan described the enabling legislation, makeup, and function of the Urban Forestry Committee, and expressed his general support for the inclusion of youth membership on bodies. He stated that based on his experience, as a former member of the body, it was an effective body. Vice Chair Rice requested clarification on whether there was another body that addressed parks and public space, and Chair Dwan reminded him that the body had previously recommended to dissolve the Recreation and Youth Commission as defunct. Chair Dwan also noted that the Conservation Commission advises the same department as the Urban Forestry Committee, and in his eye serves a similar function. Vice Chair Rice stated that he believes that



City of Somerville
Review of Multiple-Member Bodies Committee
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, August 5, 2026
6:00p.m.

the substance of the deliberation of the two bodies and the topics they discuss are likely quite different, and voice a general inclination to keep them separate, but wanted to ensure that the bodies received the same level of review as others that were previously recommended for consolidation. Liaison Broderick reiterated that the committee had felt more information was necessary before taking action on the Conservation Commission and suggested that the discussion of the Urban Forestry Committee may similarly benefit from hearing from staff to surface differences and similarities in the work of the two bodies. Chair Dwan agreed and suggested a preliminary recommendation to retain, pending revision after further conversation. Chair Dwan moved to recommend retaining the Urban Forestry Committee. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of four in favor (Broderick, Henderson Rice, Dwan), one absent (Clingan), and none opposed.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Dwan moved to adjourn at 8:00p.m. The motion was approved on a roll call vote of four in favor (Broderick, Henderson, Rice Dwan), one absent (Clingan), and none opposed.