

September 2026 Meeting Minutes

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Jake Wilson

Thursday, September 17, 2026 , 6:30-8:00PM

Meeting Information

Members

* = present

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|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. Ted Alexander * | 13. Steven Mulder* |
| 2. Ginny Alverson | 14. Barbara Myers * |
| 3. Meredith Brown * | 15. Vitor Pamplona (Vice Chair)* |
| 4. Rachel Chiquione * | 16. Zach Rosenberg* |
| 5. Laura Evans* | 17. Andrew Rosenfeld * |
| 6. Christopher Ferry* | 18. Alessandra Seiter (Chair) * |
| 7. Susan Foley * | 19. Mackenzie Webb* |
| 8. Christopher Friend * | 20. Ben Ewen-Campen (Ex Officio, Ward 3
City Councilor) |
| 9. Preston Gutelius * | 21. Katherine White (Ex Officio, OSPCD
Mobility)* |
| 10. Satoko Hirai | 22. Justin Schreiber (Ex Officio, OSPCD
Mobility) |
| 11. Sebastian Lopes-Filho* | |
| 12. Brenda Marvin (Secretary) * | |

Guests

1. Marc Levy
2. Samantha Quinn
3. Zachary Yaro

Acting Secretary

Mackenzie Webb

Call to Order

6:30

Agenda

Procedural Business

- Minutes from August will be amended to change “Those with Handicaps” to “those with disabilities”
- With amendment, minutes approved by voice vote, after motion and second.

Announcements

- N/A

Public Comment

- There was no public comment.

Subcommittee Updates

- Community Events. Gilman Sq Arts & Music Festival. They had a successful tabling event. Debriefed from that event and discussed upcoming tabling events. Upcoming is Union Sq Farmer’s Market and seeking more volunteers as well. Also, Monster Mash in October for tabling, you can wear a costume. Alessandra updated us on next steps on the Assembly Sq Walk Audit Report
- Design Review will discuss during the second agenda point.
- Special Projects did not meet.

Review Proposed Changes to the PTAC Bylaws

- Alessandra introduces the update to the PTAC Bylaw discussion. She showed us a list of potential Bylaw questions to facilitate discussion. None of it is binding or Prescriptive and can be combined or changed, only used for discussion purposes.
- Discussion Questions
- How should we evaluate whether members are in good standing?
 - Laura Evans says she is concerned about too many members rolling off at once and potentially making it so we cannot reach quorum if it takes a long time to replace
 - Susan brings up a potential Performance Improvement plan for members to improve their standing before they are
 - Brenda Marvin says she would like to avoid appointments by the Mayor because that could take a long time. She also mentions she is against a probationary period because the expectations are outlined clearly from the start and if you feel you cannot meet the expectations you should be reaching out to the committee. And if there is an extenuating circumstance they can reach out to the committee and discuss flexibility
 - Ted Alexander proposes that there could be a standing agenda reminder of the expectations
 - Alessandra says she is hearing more of an inclination to do away with the official terms and more of an ad hoc basis
 - Ted asks if there is any official standard or if we can make these changes
 - Rachel Chicoine proposes that there are check in periods at a set frequency
 - Meredith agrees with Ted and proposes a link to where this logged so members can check in if they are in good standing and she agrees with option 1A.

- When should we evaluate
 - Alessandra says that a yearly evaluation could be limiting if someone has an extenuating circumstance and having a recruitment drive yearly is a lot of work on the mobility team
 - Preston proposes a six month update and shows all the data and might be in a 2 year term but you have a rolling update on a shorter period so you can stay on top of it. This could avoid the issue of someone joining mid cycle.
 - Rachel asks about the administrative burden, are peoples terms staggered and so this means that there would be a review every single year anyway depending on when they started.
 - Kate says she interpreted it to mean not 2 years from when you start but just every 2 years there would be a review. Kate notes that currently there is not strict tracking of terms now because of the way its structured. She asks if we move to a 2 year cycle, what if more people decide to leave voluntarily and there is a gap between when people leave and when we can recruit. She mentions the burden on the PTAC members who were part of the interview process in addition to the City staff. She says that this past cycle there was an increase in applications from prior cycles and there were over 30 applications
 - Ted asks who would be doing the tracking because of administrative burden. Someone will have to maintain a spreadsheet
 - Brenda seconds Ted's point that she wants it to be easy to maintain and says she agrees we should send the link of the attendance.
 - Alessandra says that community event attendance is informally tracked but there is not a real
 - Brenda says that there were 30 applications and so if someone joins and is not able to put a effort into this, then there are others who would be enthusiastic to fill the spot
 - Alessandra addresses Kate's comment around what if more people leave, and says our minimum number of members is 14 so we have some
- How often
 - Alessandra asks members whether they agree with serving 1 year or 2. There are 4 votes for 1 year and 6 for 2 years
- How should we handle new members who won't have served a full year at Dec 31st.
 - Ted proposes that in your first year you do not have to do acting secretary and community events, but you shouldn't get a pass on attending meetings.
 - Meredith agrees with Ted and mentions a new member might want to get more context from the meetings before attending more "intimidating" things such as acting secretary and events
 - Sebastian agrees with prior comments and says it is good to attend the meetings first before diving into the "harder" events
 - Alessandra asks Brenda if this "combo" solution would cause difficulty in tracking and Brenda says it should be doable and people shouldn't feel super nervous about taking the minutes because we do not expect them to be verbatim what was said.
 - Rachel asks about a tiered system for those with a year and without, and says she agrees with the meeting requirement
 - Kate says she agrees that the events can be intimidating and so she thinks it should be okay to "shadow" someone else and maybe the event requirement in the first year could be difficult if they don't feel comfortable
 - Alessandra mentions that you do not have to be the point person at a table, but you could attend an event in a more flexible way such as attending a walk audit as a participant or shadowing someone at a tabling event.

- Alessandra asks if we should exempt first years from both requirements or one or the other
 - Ted says he thinks administratively easier to exempt from both
 - Informal Poll 9 people support exempting from both, 2 vote for exempting from one or the other
- Brenda says she thinks even if people are exempt from the requirement that people will most likely sign up and participate, just they won't be required
- Create a tiered system of participation requirements
- What happens if we have more members than acting secretary slots
 - Rachel says she thinks that evaluating every 2 years would align with the other ideas we have had, and if we get to a point that we need people to sign up we can ask like we have been doing in emails lately
- What kind of flexibility should we give members in meeting participation requirements
 - Laura says she feels strongly to offer flexibility to members if they need accommodations
 - Rachel seconds
 - Kate asks if there should be a process for knowing if someone needs accommodation, because otherwise how will we know. Alessandra asks if there is a recommendation from the city on how the process would work in other situations
 - Brenda says she thinks that we can use the honor system and trust that people are acting in good faith, they don't need to describe what the outstanding issue. Brenda says its easier if people are proactive and tell us ahead of time and not just disappear and not tell anyone.
 - Vitor mentions that the goal of these bylaws is to make sure people are participating and also to provide fairness to other members
 - Susan agree with the honor system unless theres an egregious abandonment such as someone not responding for 6+ months.
 - Alessandra suggests that when a member joins they are given the requirements, and if they foresee any issues with meeting the requirements then they can reach out to mobility and the chair and request flexibility on any requirements. There can be a check in at a set schedule (every 6 months etc) and so if someone disappears then
 - Susan asks if there is a requirement for residency in Somerville. Kate explains that yes you would need to work or live in Somerville and have strong ties to the community.
 - Ted says that in the current bylaws that require residency and that has happened before where someone has moved out of Somerville and they have left the committee or attended as a guest.
- If members are notion good standing, should they be eligible to continue serving until new members are appointed
 - Ted says that he supports having this be decided at the discretion of city staff and officers and Rachel and Laura agree with this.
- Alessandra thanks the group for the discussion and says the officers and city staff will synthesize the discussion and come back to the group with recommendations for updating the bylaws

Update on Squires Bridge

- Alessandra introduces the topic and Vitor will lead a more in depth discussion on the proposed letter.
- Vitor gives an overview of the project. The bridge is over many train tracks and is between Brickbottom and the Twin city plaza, and the bridge is a connection point. It has been recently repainted and there is some protection for bikes & pedestrians but it is still not great especially at night. They refer to this path under the bridge as "the Scary Way".

- The new bridge design has improvements to provide more light underneath (Less scary way). Has protected bike lanes, trees and pedestrian space. This project connects to the McGrath redesign
- The design is at 25% so it does not have a lot of details, but we want to provide feedback early in this project.
- Vitor says it is important for the neighborhoods to maintain connectivity. Currently there are 3 staircases to access the bridge and one has been taken down. He stresses that it is important to access this bridge to get to Twin city plaza for shopping needs. Currently people's options are not good other than using the bridge, and the staircases are not in the plan, and he stresses making sure this access is maintained.
- The letter proposes maintaining the 3 stairs and also adding an elevator for ADA compliance, he believes this will not be done but we will ask regardless.
- There are currently 4 bus stops that would be effected by this redesign
- The city of Cambridge is working on a future Grand Junction path which connects to the community path and so this new design should take this in mind because potentially there could be a high volume of people using this path. This would cross over McGrath. The Cambridge plan does not have a decision on how to connect the Community Path with the Grand Junction because there is a long time horizon. There was some mention of a shared use path to avoid crossing McGrath.
- Summary of the Letter
 - Bring the 3 stairs up to code, and possible elevator
 - Enhance ped experience
 - Add traffic calming infrastructure
 - Align with 1 McGrath Redevelopment and Grand Junction
 - Add a grade separated underpass using rufo rd
 - Add trees, wayfinding, lighting to improve ped experience
 - Scary Way protections for u turns and speeding, add parks, art, etc
 - New first class bus stops
 - Sidewalks for reliable winter maintenance
 - Green stormwater infrastructure and sewer separation
- Christopher Ferry says he is concerned about trees on the bridge due to soil etc. Vitor says he does not think the trees will really be there. Christopher says he would rather have the trees by the sidewalk where the shade would help pedestrians.
- Chris Friend asks if there is any planned disruption to the green line, and one other time there was disruption to Union for 1 month so this would probably be even longer. Vitor responds that they plan to do the staging in Brickbottom, and the development would be in stages. However, it might be too early to know the effect on the MBTA. He will add this concern to the letter.
- Susan asks about the stairs and elevator. She is concerned with the stairs and if ramps might be an alternative for people with accessibility needs. Rachel responds that the MassDOT presentation mentions very little about ADA compliance and the Elevator was proposed by the Brickbottom neighborhood plan and it seems unlikely that MassDOT would likely not support an elevator.
- Alessandra proposes changing our recommendation from specifically mentioning the stairs and change it to recommending an accessible access point with the elevator from the Brickbottom neighborhood plan
 - Ted suggests saying we should request having as good access as they currently have.
- Zachary (Guest) requests the letter includes asking them to pave the section of the ramp/ bridge on the Grand Junction connection due to delays at the Hotel development. Alessandra suggests sending the letter to the Grand Junction Project team as well as MassDOT. Vitor says we can always ask but this would be a large change from existing plans.
- Alessandra motions to send the letter with the following additions

- Move plantings to edge
- Minimize disruption to greenline
- Replace recommendation on the stairs to an accessible connection
- Pave the grand junction connection even if the path is not completed yet.
- Ted & Christopher second and all agree.

Meeting Ended

8:00 pm