CITY OF SOMERVILLE

RANKED-CHOICE VOTING COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted remotely via Zoom.

DATE: November 18th 6:00pm

Attendance

Name	Title	Email	Attendance
Chris Oates	Chair	croates@gmail.com	Present
Eleanor Barish	Member	ebarish@k12.somerville.ma.us	Absent
James Leo Beddard	Member	jlb4dsc@gmail.com	Present
Crystal Huff	Member	crystal@crystalhuff.com	Present
Jon Link	Member	jlink@somervillema.gov	Present
Michelle Lippens	Member	mlippens@k.12.somerville.ma.us	Absent
Jack Perenick	Member	jhperenick@gmail.com	Present
Barry Rafkind	Member	barry.rafkind@gmail.com	Present
Nicholas Salerno	Member	nsalerno@somervillema.gov	Present

City staff present: Megan Arruda (Elections) and Maria Pierotti (Elections).

Meeting called to order: 6:00 p.m. by Chris Oates, Committee Chair.

Meeting adjourned: 7:25 pm by Chris Oates, Committee Chair.

Call to Order

Committee Chair Chris Oates called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Administrative Items

2.1 Review of the Committee's Charge and Scope

The Committee reviewed its charge and scope. Members discussed that the Committee is tasked with recommending a ranked-choice voting system; it is not responsible for implementing a system or determining whether ranked-choice voting will ultimately be adopted.

Members discussed whether the Committee's work should focus exclusively on comparing ranked-choice voting methods or also consider other types of voting. Crystal Huff suggested that other voting methods could be considered. Councilor Link and Jack Perenick agreed that the primary focus should remain on ranked-choice voting, while allowing for a review of other methods.

The Committee discussed opportunities for public participation and engagement. Crystal Huff expressed support for reaching out to the public to help inform the Committee's decisions. Jack Perenick suggested that the Committee first develop the basic elements of its report and then solicit public input. Public engagement will be added to the December meeting agenda.

Members discussed the Committee's 18-month timeline and the milestones that should be established. The Committee liaison will contact the City Clerk's Office to confirm the deadline for submitting its report to the City Council.

2.2 Types of Ranked-Choice Voting

The Committee discussed several ranked-choice voting methods:

1. **Traditional ranked-choice voting:** Voters rank candidates (for example, first, second, and third choice). An instant runoff process eliminates the candidate with the fewest votes, and those votes are transferred to the next-ranked continuing candidate.
2. **Proportional representation:** Cambridge uses this approach. Candidates must reach a specified threshold to be elected. Votes are transferred among remaining candidates as candidates are elected or eliminated, according to the method's rules.
3. **Sequential:** Voters select their first choice. When a candidate is eliminated, that candidate's votes are transferred to the next-ranked candidate.
4. **Bottoms-up:** The candidate in last place is eliminated, and votes are transferred. The process continues until a winner is determined.

2.3 Candidates and Offices to Be Included

The Committee discussed which candidates or offices should be included in a ranked-choice voting system. Crystal Huff requested additional information on the subject before the Committee makes any decisions.

3. Additional Topics for Further Investigation

The Committee identified the following topics for further research and discussion:

- How same-day voter registration works and will interact with ranked-choice voting result tabulation.
- The use of central tabulation with ranked-choice voting results.
- How and when ranked-choice voting could be used in special elections.
- The cost of conducting a citywide election to see what cost savings would be when eliminating a preliminary election and whether preliminary elections would still be necessary.
- Whether ranked-choice voting could be used for ballot questions or initiatives.
- Whether all elected offices should use ranked-choice voting.
- Which ranked-choice voting method should be considered.

4. Cambridge Ranked-Choice Voting Presentation

The Council approved a motion authorizing Somerville City staff to contact Cambridge to request a presentation on its ranked-choice voting system.

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:25pm

NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. A recording of these proceedings is available online through Agendas, Minutes, & More.