

Public Services

Kathleen M. Feldman-Chair

Hannah L. Bowen

Steven M. Crowley

Finance and Property

Scott D. Houseman-Chair

Julie R. Flowers

Matthew J. St. Hilaire

**Joint Meeting of Committee on Finance And Property
and Committee on Public Services
City Council Committee of the Whole
Public Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 25, 2022, 6:00PM
City Council Chambers, 191 Cabot St.**

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Feldman called the Committee on Public Services meeting to order at 6:05pm.

Public Services members present: Bowen, Crowley, Feldman

Houseman called to order the Committee on Finance and Property and Committee of the Whole.

Finance and Property members present: St. Hilaire, Houseman

Other Councilors present: Rand, Sweeney

Order #058-Councilor Bowen and Councilor Houseman-Rodent infestation in downtown and other neighborhoods

Order #064-Councilor Houseman-Rodent Control

Danielle Spang, 16 Mulberry Street, shared her family's experience and showed a picture of a rat flattened on Pond St. that was still on the road after two days. Spang noted the City's policy is to not pick up wildlife under a certain size. There is still an issue with litter downtown. Downtown there have been at least three neighborhood cleanups per month. Spang urged the Council and City to do some more community outreach and education if the carry-in carry-out citywide plan is going to continue.

Joan Matton, 26 Chase Street, stated that last spring she had to hire an exterminator for \$790 because there was an issue with the building next door and heaping trash barrels. A new owner came, cleaned and put in trash cans with lids. Another building nearby had an overflowing dumpster. The owner of the building got a larger dumpster. These are all common sense. Matton suggested getting after the landlords and making sure the restaurant dumpsters are checked too. Matton asked why the City does not pick up dead rats and stated it is a health issue to have dead rats in the street. Matton also asked if another health inspector would be hired to replace the one who left recently.

Houseman stated he did not know the answer about the City's policy and shared the experience in Ward 4, which is a residential situation with holes in the roof and debris in the backyard. Part of the challenge the City has is matters of privacy and private property and how those intersect with matters of public health. It does present a challenge for the city to navigate. It is not just one kind of issue that creates these problems.

Feldman stated she is working with the Sustainability Director, Erina Keefe, to work on apartment building recycling compliance. There are still questions about trash barrels downtown. There will be another health inspector hired.

Andrea Fox, 12 Judson Street, stated that history shows the pace of development has gone on without enough due diligence for this issue. Fox stated she continues to see apathy and has an

abutter issue with 10 Judson Street. The steps need to be taken more quickly. There are a lot more measures that downtown restaurants can take.

Feldman asked for an update on data collection.

Chief of Staff Joscelyn Ruelle-Kersker stated that reporting through the website is really helpful for collecting the data of service requests. Right now the City does not have a ton of data or people who have sent in those requests. Most of them are downtown in certain hotspots, but there is not a lot to go off of at this time.

There was some discussion about smart box traps, which can send data back to the City, and programs in other communities like Somerville, MA and Portland, ME.

Bowen stated that some of the goals of these conversations are to prompt action then to track that action. Even though the data is still being pulled together, the impacts are clear and the needs of the community are clear. The problem is pretty well established. Bowen stated her hope for tonight's meeting is to come away with some action items. Bowen stated it seems like there are a few buckets. There is the inspection, data collection, and mapping of the hot spots to understand where to prioritize resources. Then, once those spots have been identified and tracked, there is seeing how different interventions are working. On the intervention side, the trash enforcement/public education outreach seems to be a big one and knowing who on the cityside is the right point person for enforcement and education. Bowen recommended adapting what is working in other places. Bowen asked if there are any pieces of City ordinances to look at updating and noted that there are communities that have more of a fine or fee structure related to waste management or construction. Bowen asked about what steps are happening for this summer and how to get those updates.

Houseman asked about a staff working group and citizen representation.

Ruelle-Kersker stated there is not necessarily a working group within the city. An integrated pest management document is in the works with a group that meets as it is able and as there is more information to discuss. Ruelle-Kersker stated she would be happy to try to pull something together if someone wanted to meet on a more regular basis.

Spang stated the community group has made 250 magnets with a QR code that sends people to the reporting program. The Board of Health voted to, as much as possible, consolidate data into Qsend/3-1-1 when any emails or calls are made. Spang noted Somerville's pilot program. There are smaller boxes called "rat zappers" that do not collect data but will indicate with a light if it is full and can be emptied, which would be a smaller investment.

Sweeney asked if the city is waiting to see how successful it is in Somerville before trying anything and asked if the residents request the boxes or if the City decides where to put them.

Ruelle-Kersker stated that it seems like the city chooses locations based on the data collected.

Houseman stated that one of the appealing aspects of these kinds of traps is that it does not inject poison into the ecosystem and is more protective of house cats and other animals because of the nature of the box.

Rand stated she has included in her Ward 2 newsletter a link to the website for reporting any issues or that she will put in a report herself if a resident calls about an issue. Rand stated she is excited about the new compliance officer position. It sounds like 50% of that time will be spent on waste enforcement. Rand asked if some of that time will be spent on dumpster inspections

and stated it would be helpful to have regular inspections in the downtown area. Rand stated that separating food waste from the dumpsters will make a huge difference because a locked compost bin will be more effective than a dumpster. National Grid said they will start a pest management program two weeks before digging when working on the gas lines. Rand stated she spoke with a National Grid foreman and asked if they had heard of some of these other things to use. They said they were open to them, but they had already come to an agreement with the Beverly Board of Health. It may be something to discuss with the Board of Health. Putting out poison does not seem to be working.

Fox suggested that since restaurant licensing happens every December, then if there is not compliance there could be repercussions of licenses not being issued.

Houseman expressed concern about possibly being siloed as a city government and encouraged talking with each other to coordinate conversations.

Rand stated that part of how it got this far is that technically the City does not view it as their purview to help residents get rid of rodents on private property but part of the problem is that they are everywhere. It seems like Judson Street is a good pilot area. There is so much more public education that can be done.

Houseman suggested that one of the ways the City could deal with the issue of private property is having something like a public library but instead of books the City has these rat traps and is willing to loan them out to address the problem. It is possible to go onto the property with the permission and consent of the owner. Beverly can try our own experimental approach and could lead the way. It seems like the City could generate enough money to come up with a pilot program.

Crowley stated that this is an issue now and there has to be something that can be done and taken care of now to slow it down, even talking to all the businesses.

Kellie, 1 Judson Street, stated she has burrows in her yard and wanted to bring up the point of keeping the construction companies accountable. There will be more disturbances with more construction, and it is a huge concern.

Feldman asked about Councilors drafting an ordinance to have rodent control be part of the building permitting process or if that already exists or is in process.

Ruelle-Kersker stated she thinks that is a part of what is being worked on now. There are rules around what should be done for rodent control if earth is moved.

Houseman stated that it seems like now it is left to the developer to determine that plan instead of the City setting the minimum or scope.

Bowen and Houseman expressed support for having someone from the Council or the neighborhoods involved in the stages of developing an ordinance. Houseman recommended, if there is not already a rodent plan agreement with National Grid, making sure it includes someone from the Council and citizens before the Council acts on it.

St. Hilaire left at 7:25pm and the Committee on Finance and Property meeting was adjourned.

Nicole Murphy, 44½ Chase Street, stated there is a dumpster abutting her property and when the truck comes to empty it trash falls in her backyard. There is apathy among neighbors who are unhappy with the situation but do not think the City will do anything, so some outreach would be helpful.

Matton suggested getting the street sweeper once a week to help take care of trash and expressed concern about the Bowl-O-Mat because that is by the water and who knows what has been in there and what will happen when they take it down.

Ruelle-Kersker encouraged people to email or reach out and thanked the neighborhood group for their work and diligence.

Bowen asked if there is anything else the Councilors can do to help with outreach and communication.

Spang stated the three most important things are to get rid of any food sources, water sources, or anywhere rats can shelter. There are people who are willing to go door to door and hand out the health departments flyers who are just waiting for permission.

Houseman stated the Council is meeting with Mayor Cahill and Mr. Ayles later this week and could discuss this being addressed in this year's budget.

Feldman stated that the Health Department flyer has been very informative, and Councilors could recirculate that through social media or other tools.

There was some procedural discussion about what to do with the orders.

Houseman stated that for Finance and Property, there is the financial aspect of this. Houseman stated he would like to be able to talk about it within the confines of the subcommittee. As long as it sits on the agenda, it can be discussed when it arises. Once it is out of the subcommittee then that cannot be done. Because it involves a budgetary or monetary response, it is helpful to have a piece of this sitting there. Once this year's budget is taken care of, there will not necessarily be a place for this to be on Finance and Property's docket as an item.

Feldman suggested closing this out of Public Services, then if more information comes in, it could be submitted as a new item of communication.

Bowen stated she would connect with the Health Department on next steps.

A motion for the Committee on Public Services voted to receive Order #058 and place it on file was made and seconded. A vote was taken, and the motion carried (3-0).

A motion for the Committee on Public Services voted to receive Order #064 and place it on file was made and seconded. A vote was taken, and the motion carried (3-0).

A motion to adjourn Committee of the Whole was made and seconded. A vote was taken, and the motion carried (6-0). A motion to adjourn Committee on Public Services was made and seconded. A vote was taken, and the motion carried (3-0). The meeting adjourned at 7:50pm.