

Ten Hills Resident Advisory Group Meeting Notes

Wednesday, September 19, 2007

City Staff Present:

Stephanie Hirsch, SomerStat Director
Ethan Field, ResiStat Analyst
Hai Tiet, SomerStat Analyst
Officer James Slattery

Elected Officials Present:

Ward 4 Alderman: Walter Pero
Alderman-At-Large John Connolly
Alderman-At-Large Dennis Sullivan
Alderman-At-Large William White

Immediate Concern:

- There is concern about the Mystic Activities Center parking lot being closed without notice. The City should make sure that it is open by Election Day, next Tuesday. (Note: This issue was immediately addressed with the Somerville Housing Authority and the Board of Elections.)

Trash Barrels:

- By request of the last meeting, two trash barrels have been placed in the *Blessings of the Bay* Boathouse area. They currently look a little haphazard; we will look into why they aren't more carefully placed.
- Still waiting for barrel at Shore Drive and Fellsway from Mass Highway.

Trees:

- To remove a tree, Call 311 or go to <http://crm.4gov.net/somervillema/> and put in a DPW request: "*Request for Arborist To Examine Tree Health*". The tree will be inspected. If it's dead or poses a safety risk, it will be removed. If it is alive, there will be a tree hearing, which will be announced in the newspaper two weeks in advance and on the tree itself one week in advance.
- The DPW is wondering if people would also like to receive notices about tree hearings in their neighborhood. Residents *are* interested in receiving flyers/announcements if there is a tree hearing regarding a tree close to their home. (Ald. Pero noted that it's against the law to place such flyers into people's mailboxes.)
- A resident expressed concern that the City only had one tree-trimming machine, which led to months-long delays in responding to tree-trimming requests. ResiStat will confirm that the City has purchased another truck and get data from the DPW to see if there has been a significant reduction in wait-time for tree trimmings.

Grimmons Park:

- Aldermen present announced the likelihood of the BOA adopting a bond issue to improve Grimmons Park.

- Alderman Pero noted that Grimmons was not originally slated for capital improvements this year, but was moved up to this year as a result of resident activism.
- Residents were glad the park was scheduled for repair. They said it currently wasn't very attractive, and they had concerns about the rear retaining wall.
- Residents expressed continued concern about the park being used as a hangout spot by teens at night, possibly using alcohol and/or drugs. Lights in the park seem to be broken; it's very dark.
- Officer Slattery of the Somerville Community Police reported that patrols had been increased due to call in May and June. After that, the number of people calling fell, and so the patrols were shifted to other areas. If there is an immediate concern on a given night, residents should call 911 and report disturbances or suspicious behavior in progress. Residents can also call 311 and be connected to the Police Department's administrative line, which will determine if a dispatch is needed. "If you don't call, we don't know, and can't respond."

Airplane Noise:

- The Mayor met with MassPort and confirmed that there have been increased takeoffs over Somerville due to the new runway, which has caused the spike in airplane noise complaints. MassPort said that it is the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) who decides which runways are used and for what purpose. The Mayor has written a letter requesting a meeting with the FAA and with the State's congressional delegation.
- Calling both 311 (or the 311 web interface at <http://crm.4gov.net/somervillema>) and MassPort will have the maximum impact. The Mayor would like to be able to report in his letter how many complaints have been logged.
- Alderman White reported that the BOA had opposed construction of this new runway, and that they had negotiated an agreement with the FAA that required the FAA to report regularly the impact of the change in air traffic (noise, pollution, etc.) to nearby cities. We should follow-up on this requirement.

State Rep. Carl Sciortino:

- Following the July 11 meeting, Rep. Sciortino contacted multiple State agencies regarding concerns from the last meeting. He could not attend tonight due to a scheduling conflict, but hopes to be at the next meeting.
- One or two residents reported having contacted Rep Sciortino directly about a concern and that his response was timely and very cooperative. Residents generally expressed appreciation for his attention to these issues.

State Dept. of Conservation and Recreation:

- There was widespread appreciation for the work recently done by the DCR on Shore Drive: Clearing overgrowth along the river, trimming back the lower tree branches along the river, repaving the asphalt river path, and the concrete resident-side sidewalks.
- A resident observed that the ground along the new asphalt path is still quite torn up, with no grass, and needs to be reseeded and tended soon, or it will be muddy for several months.

Mass Highway and MBTA:

- All concerns from the previous meeting are still awaiting action.
- A majority of attendees identified the steel plate in front of Stop & Shop as a high-priority issue – there were concerns that permanent damage could be done to cars by the problem. Some residents suggested that a cone or other warning sign could be placed there until the plate can be removed.
- Additional observations:
 - The walk-light button on the Northeast corner of the intersection of Shore Drive and Mystic Ave is broken.
 - The lights under the highway over both Temple Street/Road and Shore Drive need replacing, particularly Shore Drive.
 - There is a mini-sinkhole by a manhole cover when exiting Stop & Shop heading towards Mystic Ave. This could cause car damage or accidents.
 - In addition to the complaint about the Bus Stop on Mystic Ave at Temple, there was concern about a bus stop (or lack thereof) and Mystic Ave and Shore Drive.

Needles & Other Drug Litter:

- Police have been doing daily checks for needles along Shore Drive and adjoining blocks.
- Residents continued to express concern about needles. In particular, residents requested checks for needles in an area that is on the property of a condominium association on or near Puritan Road, however, this area is under the management of the association. There is also sand on the sidewalk near the condos which could cause people to slip and fall. ResiStat will work with Police and Inspectional Services to determine what can be done.
- Residents should call 311 if they think that a condo or any property owner is not complying with the law about keeping their property clean.

Law Enforcement / Public Safety Issues:

- There is a new neighbor on Gov. Winthrop who uses a gas grill on his porch, and leaves gas bottles lying around. This is illegal and a serious fire hazard. (Officer Slattery: The law states that open-flame grills of any kind may not be used within 10 feet of a house. Residents should call 311 or 911).
- The Stop & Shop parking lot is not well-lit and is very dark at night. It's a frightening place to go and residents are starting to avoid it at night. Crime in that lot seems to be on the rise. Even if the City can't do anything, someone should contact the Stop & Shop management.
- Residents suspect there is an illegal rooming house on Sargent Ave (Ward 4-2). Residents should call 311 with concerns like this, and submit a request that an inspector visit the specific addresses.
- Residents would like to see statistics about how many needles police are picking up, as well as other potentially drug-related paraphernalia (needle caps, rubber gloves, baggies, empty cigarette packs used to contain drugs, etc.) Ethan Field reported we'd provide this at a subsequent meeting.

Upcoming Meetings:

- Alderman Pero will try to schedule the next community meeting for Wednesday, 10/24. FRIT & IKEA will try to be present. There will also be an opportunity to discuss drug-

related concerns, and an update about Grimmons Park. That meeting would not be an official ResiStat meeting, but would be announced through the ResiStat channels.

- The next ResiStat-related community meeting would likely be the 2nd or 4th Wednesday in November (the 3rd Wednesday is the day before Thanksgiving.)