

East Broadway ResiStat Meeting Notes

March 26, 2008

City Officials Present:

William Roche, Ward 1 Alderman
John Connolly, Alderman at Large
Dennis Sullivan, Alderman at Large
Chief Anthony Holloway, Somerville Police Department
Captain John O'Connor, SPD
Eric Friedman, Senior Analyst, SomerStat
Ethan Field, ResiStat Analyst, SomerStat

Police Data:

Ethan Field presented Police data (see presentation), to give residents an idea of what kinds of data they could request to see at ResiStat meetings.

- A resident asked why **drug-related crime** was not included in the data. Ethan Field responded that the data had come from a Police Department compilation, and wasn't sure what the criteria were for inclusion or non-inclusion. *Update:* The data is chosen based on issues known to be of top concern to residents. Drug-related arrests are comparatively low in Somerville. Also, there are many different categories of drug-related arrests: Drug use, possession, sale, drugs found in a car during a traffic stop, misuse of prescription drugs, operating a motor vehicle under the influence, etc. Some of these crimes are of great concern to residents, others are not – so reporting a single number for "Drug-Related Arrests" would be misleading. Probably the most significant impact in Somerville is when addicts steal property in order to pay for drugs – but that information is reflected in the data for break-ins, thefts, etc.
 - A resident asked if the data included **businesses**. Ethan Field responded that it's all of Ward 1, including the Assembly Square and Innerbelt areas, as well as the residential areas.
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Police Reorganization:

Somerville Chief of Police Anthony Holloway presented information about the upcoming reorganization of the Police Somerville Department (see presentation.) He mentioned that the new East Substation would be nearby, on Broadway between Minnesota and Wisconsin Streets.

- **Substations:** Residents had a number of questions about the substations. The Chief was quick to point out that having a new substation on a particular block was not about addressing crime in a specific small neighborhood. The purpose of the substations is so that Officers don't have to cross the city in order to file their reports and to debrief with the district Captain. Officers will still spend the vast majority of their time out on the streets and in the neighborhoods, not at the substations.
- **Seniority:** A resident asked if there would be a mix of seniority in both the East and the West District. The Chief responded that the once-a-year bidding process would still be based in seniority, but that given the long-term commitment to each district, the impact of seniority on overall performance would likely be less.

- **Patrolling:** A resident asked if officers would be varying their patrolling routes as a part of the reorganization. The Chief responded that officers usually vary how they patrol a neighborhood, to avoid showing a visible pattern. This would be unlikely to change. However, after the reorganization, officers would be more likely to be on foot, or on bikes, or on motorcycles, and more accessible to residents.
 - **Promotion:** A resident asked if the Police would be promoting this new program when it finally launches. The Chief responded, absolutely yes! Some of the aspects of the reorganization are already underway, the two main things limiting the launch are establishing the substations, and waiting until the new hires finish training at the Police Academy. When the substations and enough officers are in place, there will be press releases not only to the local news, but also to various non-English newspapers so that law-abiding immigrant residents understand that an increased police presence is not something they should fear.
 - **Timing:** A resident asked about whether or not more officers were deployed at certain times. The Chief said that because you can never predict at what time a serious incident might occur, there are always the same number of officers on duty at any time of day.
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Crime and Other Community Concerns:

- **Break-Ins:** A resident reported that there had been break-ins on Tufts Street at one point in time, and the neighbors got together and invested in improved lighting and other safety measures, which helped reduce the break-ins. Ethan Field mentioned that in response to another ResiStat group's request, the Police department has made their information on how to better secure your home against break-ins is now available on the city's 311 web site: <http://faqs.somervillema.intelligovsoftware.com/homebreakins.aspx>
- **Litter and Trash:** One resident was very concerned about litter and trash in the neighborhood. He was particularly concerned with businesses that did not seem to be cleaning their own property. Many other residents seemed to agree that litter and trash was a problem everywhere in the neighborhood: streets, sidewalks, yards, and business properties. A resident who lived near Sullivan Square reported that commuters walking to and from the T stop seem to tend to throw trash in yards on their walk home. Ethan Field responded that the City has a "Neighborhood Impact Team" (NIT) composed of representatives from Inspectional Services, Police, Fire, and Board of Health. They make visits to businesses who need reminders about being good neighbors. Ethan also mentioned that if the neighbors agreed that one area seemed to be getting a lot of trash, the City could potentially put a trash barrel there.
- **Big Roads and Crime:** A longtime neighborhood resident commented that East Somerville used to have a very positive neighborhood feel about it, and people knew their neighbors. This resident said that when the big highways came (I-93 and McGrath) people from outside the City could get in and out of East Somerville very quickly, which this resident suggested made it an easier target for crime. This resident wondered if there was any way to improve what he called the "integrity" of the neighborhood, reducing the total number of entrances and exits, and making it harder to get into and out of the area.
- **Broadway Businesses:** A resident said she was pleased that there were new businesses being set up in what had formerly been vacant storefronts, but was concerned that those new business owners were already being the targets of crime. This resident hoped that regular patrols of Broadway businesses would be a part of the reorganization.
- **Noise:** A resident told the Chief that he could expect to see a lot of noise complaints in the neighborhood in the summertime.

- **Mt. Vernon Street:** A resident raised concerns about there being more cut-through traffic and more fast traffic on Mt. Vernon Street than other streets were getting.
- **Streets:** A resident reported a sinkhole in front of her Broadway business. *Update:* Alderman Roche put this work order into the 311 system and it has been filled.
- **311:** From the conversation, it became apparent that many residents still did not know that they can call 311 at any time of day or night to ask for information or City services. The Constituent Services staff manage the phones during the daytime, and at night the Police Department handles calls. There is also a web interface at <http://www.somervillema.gov> where residents can create a user account, make requests, and track the status of those requests.

Resident Priorities:

Residents were each given five votes to distribute any way they wished between the options described in the presentation, and added new ones not mentioned in the presentation. These issues will be combined with other neighborhoods' priorities to create a resident budget priorities report. Issues that emerge as the highest neighborhood or City-wide priorities will inform the City Departments as they set their goals for the upcoming year. These departmental goals determine how each department prioritizes its staff time and budget. Items originating with this ResiStat group are in **bold**.

Votes	Issue
12	Addressing trash and litter in streets, sidewalks, yards, and businesses.
11	East Broadway Sidewalk and Streetscape renovations
7	Assembly Square traffic mitigation
7	Bike and foot patrols for East Broadway
5	Implementing community policing program
5	Small Business micro-loans and storefront renovation grants.
5	Affordable housing developments
4	East Somerville Community School
4	Citywide tree inventory and expanding number of trees by 20%
4	Extend Walk signals at Broadway and McGrath
4	Keeping bars and the area around them safe from fights and crime.
3	Safe-START pedestrian improvements
3	Address volume of traffic, incl. commercial vehicles, on Mt Vernon St.
3	Street Maintenance
2	Citywide Wi-Fi
1	New city website and improved calendar of city events
1	Magoun Square traffic/pedestrian renovations
1	Central welcome desk at City Hall
1	Helping businesses avoid break-ins
0	Take over management of State-run facilities
0	Weekend hours at our branch libraries
0	Senior Housing developments
0	Re-zoning Union Square
0	Purchasing reduced-emission and alternate fuel City vehicles
0	Online credit card payment services for city bills and transactions
0	Dedicated computer kiosks in public buildings