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January 29, 2009

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE**  
**ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Committee on Public Health and Public Safety convened on January 29, 2009, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Members Aldermen John Connolly and Rebekah Gewirtz also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen Bruce Desmond and John Connolly, Administrative Assistant Jesse Baker, Chief Fire Engineer Kevin Kelleher, Deputy Fire Chief David Salvi, Police Chief Anthony Holloway, Deputy Police Chief Michael Cabral, DPW Commissioner Stan Koty, Steve MacEchern from the DPW and interested members of the public.

**186603 – New fire fighter training**

Chief Kelleher informed the members that the process for training the city's new recruits has not changed and that since they can't be sent directly to the Fire Academy, new recruits go through an in-house training program here in Somerville. Chief Kelleher pointed out that the training provided in house covers many subjects not covered in the academy, such as medical aid & SCBA (self contained breathing apparatus) training. Recently, the Board of Aldermen approved the establishment of a reserve list for fire fighters as a means to cut down on the amount of time that new recruits have to wait before being sent to the academy. As a point of information, the Chief noted that there is no mandatory training for fire fighters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The last group of fire fighters appointed in the city went through 3 weeks of the city's mini class before being sent out on a call and then spent another week of riding as the 4<sup>th</sup> person on the truck, assigned to an officer. At no time is any new recruit assigned to a truck with another new recruit.

Deputy Chief Salvi told the members that he has trained most of the city's fire fighters since 1984 and that tasks such as ladder operation, pump work, hydrant hookups and hose handling are taught more times than at the academy. He agrees that having new recruits waiting to go through the academy is not an ideal situation but feels that by providing some training in-house, they can be sent out on calls sooner.

## **186763, 186758 Vehicle maintenance & safety**

Chief Kelleher told the members that the Fire Department has a certified mechanic in the department who personally checks vehicles for any reported problems. In 2003, the department lost its 2<sup>nd</sup> mechanic and that position has not been filled. The chief noted that some of the command vehicles are 15 years old and that the mechanic does his best to keep them running. There have been no problems with faulty brakes. Somerville has a reciprocal agreement with Cambridge to provide its mechanic in the event that ours is unavailable over a weekend. The inspection of the city's aerial ladders is performed by Underwriters Laboratories on a regular basis.

Chief Holloway told the members that the Police Department has a full time mechanic but lost its part-time mechanic about 4 months ago. The department has a total of 42 vehicles and the mechanic checks each car on daily basis. Any problems found are addressed immediately. There have been no major failures or brake failures. Since police cruisers 1 through 9 are in operation 24 hrs/day, their oil is changed every two thousand miles rather than every three thousand miles.

Commissioner Koty and Superintendent McEachern said that the highway department has 26 vehicles in its fleet, with additional vehicles in various other Public Works departments. Regular maintenance is performed on a set schedule and every employee responsible for a vehicle fills out a slip to report any problems so that they can be dealt with right away. In a given year, there might be some minor vehicle incidents, e.g., scrapes, broken mirrors, etc., but there have been no major accidents.

All DPW drivers have CDL licenses. If a driver has too many vehicle accidents on the job, he/she is penalized under state and federal guidelines, impacting their personal automobile insurance. CDL license holders are held to a higher level of regulation.

### **186372 – ADA ramps**

Mr. Koty informed the members that, at the present time, the DPW does not have the funds to put in handicap ramps. Chairman White requested that the item be forwarded to SPCD for a response.

Chairman White directed the Clerk of Committees to send a communication to the City Solicitor regarding items 185821 and 186493.

Chairman White also directed the Clerk of Committees to send a communication to the City Solicitor requesting that he prepare a legal memorandum for item 186764 within 1 month, addressing the issue of surveillance cameras and the maintenance and public availability of tapes from those cameras and also to respond to questions that would be emailed directly to him by Alderman Gewirtz.

The committee discussed matters before it and took action on the following 4 items:

- 185357:** Resolution - By Ald. Connolly, That all Board members, especially Ward Aldermen, consider forwarding a list of all problem locations, with a brief explanation, to Ald. Connolly's attention within the next month, so Board Orders or Resolutions with all Aldermen at Large signed on along with the Ward Alderman, can deal directly with the appropriate city department or local

authority, to focus attention and facilitate solutions expeditiously.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be placed on file

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 3 - 0 in favor

**186009:** Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval for SPCD to appropriate \$296,367 from the Traffic Stabilization Fund to initiate seven projects for the Safe Start Program.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be placed on file

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 3 - 0 in favor

**186514:** Communication - Traffic Engineer responding to motions put forward at the Oct. 30 Public Health & Public Safety Committee meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be placed on file

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 3 - 0 in favor

**186668:** Communication - City Clerk responding to #186569 re: Vinfen contract and regulations at 81 Bartlett St. and 155 Central St.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be placed on file

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 3 - 0 in favor

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Alderman William A. White, Jr., Chairman  
Committee on Public Health and Public Safety