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May 4, 2009

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The Committee on Public Health and Public Safety convened on May 4, 2009, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Members Aldermen John Connolly and Rebekah Gewirtz also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen Walter Pero, Bruce Desmond, Maryann Heuston, Sean O'Donovan, Dennis Sullivan and Robert Trane, Administrative Assistant Jessie Baker, Police Chief Anthony Holloway, City Solicitor John Gannon, Assistant Solicitor David Shapiro, Deputy Police Chief Paul Upton, Director of Health Paulette Renault Caragianes and Mellissa McWhinney.

Swine Flu

Ms. Caragianes discussed the current state of the Swine Flu in Somerville and the Commonwealth and spoke about her network for obtaining information and updates on the situation. Ms. Caragianes also outlined procedures to be taken in the event of emergency outbreaks of illnesses in general and explained the appropriate procedures for communication. Alderman Gewirtz discussed preventing panic among the city's citizens and the need to take the situation into perspective.

Surveillance Cameras

Deputy Chief Upton gave a history of the grant which provided the city with the cameras and explained that Somerville has partnered with the City of Boston and its contiguous cities and towns to participate in this grant. Somerville has received a number of benefits and assets as a result of its participation, including \$191,000 in training reimbursements and a substantial amount of equipment in addition to the cameras. Originally, Somerville was slated to receive twenty three cameras but decreased funding has reduced that number to seven.

Alderman Gewirtz questioned if the bike path cameras were instrumental and she questioned the necessity of having them on the bike path, suggesting that lighting and an increased police presence is more effective. Deputy Chief Upton stated that if an emergency were to occur, the bike path would be critical in transporting first responders. If there were a terrorist attack, gridlock in the streets could be very harmful and footage from the cameras would allow first responders to travel efficiently to the scene of the emergency. Chief Holloway stated that new training calls for the Chief and command staff to report to the camera footage and not the emergency location. Alderman Gewirtz stated that police have emergency routes in place and questioned why the cameras were not mentioned in the 2004 and 2008 items relating to the subject grant. The Chief stated that the city has received more than \$700,000

in equipment from this grant. The items and language of the grant were vague because the type of equipment needed changes periodically. He stated that if the cameras are removed the funding of additional equipment will stop. Alderman Gewirtz stated that Cambridge adopted a resolution to remove the cameras and Chief Holloway rebutted that statement by informing the members that the cameras in Cambridge are up and running. Brookline also has cameras up and running. They are connected to a server but are not being monitored. Mr. Gannon discussed his research on inter-municipal agreements and said that Somerville is a party to a valid and binding agreement with Boston. Alderman Gewirtz stated that the installation of the cameras may not serve the interests of the public because there are civil liberty issues involved. Alderman Connolly stated that he was a member of the Board of Aldermen when the item was first approved and the Board used diligence in its decision making. Alderman Gewirtz questioned future costs to the city for the maintenance of the cameras and Chief Holloway estimated that cost to be \$12,000 to \$15,000 per year. Chief Holloway explained how the signals are encrypted and discussed the use of the zoom feature. He also stated that the MBTA and various retailers in Davis Square have camera systems in place. Alderman Gewirtz stated her concern over the locations of the cameras being released and Chief Holloway stated that they must remain secret.

Alderman Trane's motion **to inform the Department of Public Works to install signage on the bike path notifying citizens that the area is being monitored** was approved.

Alderman Gewirtz questioned whether there are written guidelines that the city must follow with respect to the cameras and Chief Holloway replied that there are no written guidelines other than the original memo on the grant. Deputy Chief Upton told the members that a meeting will be held in the near future to discuss the recent problems with Cambridge and Brookline. Alderman Gewirtz suggested that a general advisory committee be formed to review the use of the cameras and Alderman Connolly stated that such a committee is not necessary.

A motion by Alderman Connolly, as amended by Chairman White, **that from this day forward, the Chief of Police and all other Department Heads involved, advise the Board of Aldermen with respect to the purchase or receipt of any equipment under the October 14, 2004 Homeland Security Grant with the City of Boston as extended to December 31, 2010,** was approved.

A motion by Alderman Gewirtz, as amended by Chairman White, **that the Chief of Police update the Board of Aldermen 6 months from today on the operation of surveillance cameras including complaints by citizens, discuss zooming feature usage, requests by other communities to utilize data, software enhancements, changes in policy and procedure and requests for information from any person or entity,** was approved.

No papers were acted on.

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