

**24-006**  
**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
**MEETING REPORT**  
**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2024 @ 6:00 P.M.**

Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89885290293>

Call-in Number: +13126266799,,89885290293#

To participate remotely outside of Zoom, please e-mail [AHurtubise@medford-ma.gov](mailto:AHurtubise@medford-ma.gov).

Attendees: Council President Isaac “Zac” Bears; Council Vice President Kit Collins; Councillor Anna Callahan; Councillor Emily Lazzaro; Councillor Matt Leming; Councillor George Scarpelli; Councillor Justin Tseng; City Clerk Adam Hurtubise; other participants as noted in the body of this report.

President Bears called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on January 24, 2024 in the Medford City Council Chambers on the second floor of Medford City Hall, and via Zoom. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the City Council’s governing agenda for this term.

President Bears thanked participants for attending. He went over the framework for the meeting and for presentation of papers related to the governing agenda. He said he and Vice President Collins are looking at schedules for reviewing and updating the document.

Vice President Collins said she thinks this plan sounds great. She said that this is a long document but it is sketching out everything over two years. She said many of these papers will get referred to committees.

President Bears said that this framework is a living document to reflect the work the Council is doing. He said it’s an ambitious agenda. He said it is split up by committee. He said that the ordinances in Committee of the Whole are mostly done, including the tree ordinance, the leaf-blower ordinance, and the food truck ordinance. He said listed the committees for this term. He said all Councillors are members of all committees but that there are only five voting members of each committee, and a quorum is based on that group of five.

On the Committee of the Whole ordinances, President Bears said that the goal is to complete those in the next three to six months.

Councillor Callahan asked why those papers are in Committee of the Whole. President Bears said that those papers had been in subcommittees first and then went to the Committee of the Whole. He said that given the new committee structure, some of this could be looked at in various different ways.

Councillor Callahan said she appreciates the current status of the papers in committee.

President Bears said that there are a number of topics for the Administration and Finance Committee. The major projects are the annual budget process, revenue, and a number of other items, including the good landlord tax credit and multiple other initiatives. He said many of the ordinances and regulations have archaic language.

Councillor Leming asked about overlapping committee jurisdiction over various papers. President Bears suggested that there would be one committee that is slightly more relevant and the paper should go there. Councillor Lazzaro said that papers could also go from committees to Committee of the Whole. President Bears said that there is no strict checklist of steps that a paper has to go through before it moves.

Councillor Callahan said she was excited to see the percent for art ordinance. Vice President Collins said that she would share leadership on that if others were interested. President Bears said that there was a commercial vacancy and a community benefit paper that needed to be introduced.

Councillor Lazzaro said that if the goal is to start the Community Benefits Agreement Ordinance in November, would it start then or earlier or any time. President Bears said it could be presented at any time.

Councillor Callahan asked if there would be an updated digital copy of this and President Bears said he would consult with Vice President Collins. Vice President Collins said her aspiration is to check in with committee chairs monthly.

Councillor Tseng said he is excited about these ideas. Councillor Lazzaro said she admires how many real, established ordinances are already in committees. She said that this seems like a nice template for the Council to build on. President Bears said that the Council should look at what committees need to meet more frequently and what committees need to meet less frequently.

President Bears said that there is not a lot of material in the Education and Culture Committee but that this is a committee that would need to be looked at. Councillor Tseng said he wanted to plug the Lunar New Year celebration on February 10 at the Library. He said he wanted to talk about it since President Bears mentioned cultural events. He said that the Youth Commission makes more sense in another committee right now.

Councillor Callahan said she was hoping to offer more opportunities for our children to spend in the Fells. She also wanted to send out a message about Lemonade Stand days for parents and for kids.

President Bears said that some of these ideas might be a good place for interaction with the Administration's Director of Cultural Affairs, who helps to plan events.

Vice President Collins said that some of the work will be more straightforwardly legislative, including promulgating regulations and policies. She said that other work will involve other functions the Council serves.

President Bears turned to the Governance Committee and its jurisdiction, including elections, the Clerk's Office, Council Rules, City Ordinances, provisions of state law accepted by the City, updates to the Charter, and a variety of other items. He said one goal is to create an updated City Charter. He said he wanted to give the Council time to set out its own process and procedure. He said he didn't want this to take four years, especially since the Charter Study Committee has done great work. He said one concern was that the Elections report from last night's Council meeting needed further exploration in this committee, and that Councillor Callahan had also offered a pro-democracy motion in the Council meeting that could be addressed by this committee.

President Bears said that there is a discrepancy between which boards and commissions receive stipends and which do not. Councillor Tseng said much of this committee's work is work that will come through the process of working on one item. He said we shouldn't underrate the work that the Charter will take. He said he is interested in going through MGL to see what we have accepted and what we have not accepted yet.

President Bears said that Planning and Permitting is also going to have a great deal of work attached to it. It's the holistic planning and permitting work, including zoning and a variety of ordinances. Vice President Collins said that there is certainly two years of work laid out in this framework. She said that zoning reform is going to be a characteristic project of this Council. She said it might make sense to begin a conversation about organizing our year.

Councillor Tseng said that this reminds him that the three responsibilities of the Council are zoning, ordinances, and budgets. He said that there are a lot of ideas that pair really well with zoning reform. He said he is excited about the Transportation Demand Management Ordinance. He said that these are all great ideas and he is excited for the work that can be done.

Councillor Callahan said she could work on the energy disclosure and benchmarking ordinances. Councillor Tseng said he tried to include relevant points from items already passed. President Bears noted a number of papers that would need to be formally submitted.

President Bears noted the work that the Public Health and Community Safety Committee would undertake, including ordinances, regulations, and various City departments. Councillor Lazzaro said that a warming and cooling center is particularly important to her and that the timeline would be to talk to interested parties after this winter is over and start planning for next winter. She asked if this process starts with talking to Department Heads and landowners before making a motion on the floor, or whether the motion on the floor would come first. Vice President Collins said it's always

more valuable to her to involve stakeholders and experts earlier in the project. She said that it's completely fine to involve collaborators earlier in the project. Councillor Lazzaro said she doesn't want to alienate or steamroll any of our partners. She said she is very excited to get moving on all these projects.

President Bears said it is good to take a two-track approach. He said a paper could go onto the agenda and then out into the community to stakeholders and potential funders. He referenced former Councillor Caraviello's work on the new library and former Councillor Marks's work on the potential new arts center. He said a one-stop service center is a priority of his. He said he thinks that the Malden Warming Center is private and non-profit. Councillor Lazzaro said that Revere and Somerville are putting warming centers in their public buildings.

Councillor Leming said he specifically wants to discuss the plant medicine decriminalization ordinance. He said that there is work that may need to be done at the state level and that may require an update to the governing agenda in the future. Councillor Callahan said she was asked if the City could pass something that allows people to raise chickens in their backyards. She said that this is not at the ordinance stage yet.

Councillor Tseng said that he had also heard this point about chickens in back yards. He said it is an idea he finds interesting and possible. He suggested talking time to speak with Director Hunt about working with St. Francis to get the church to sell a parcel to the Y. Councillor Lazzaro said she would love to discuss that. Councillor Tseng said it's often healthy for debate just to introduce a resolution. He said that these conversations are healthy.

President Bears discussed Public Works and Facilities. He said this involves streets, utilities, the DPW, facilities, forestry, cemeteries, and a variety of other topics, including water and sewer. He said our water and sewer system is one of the poorest in Massachusetts. He also mentioned the IT department. He said street and sidewalk repairs are within this committee's oversight, as are City facilities and equipment in general. He said he wants to know the cost to restore all of our capital assets to a state of good repair and that the Administration has said it is unable to give the Council that figure. He listed a lead ordinance and a home rule petition on excise taxes for larger trucks, and other utility-related topics.

Councillor Callahan said she is excited to work on these items and would like to be the lead Councillor on the public utility accountability work. She said she is also grateful for the effort on the lead ordinance. Councillor Tseng said he submitted the public restrooms in parks and squares with this committee but that it might also work in Public Health and Community Safety.

Matthew Page-Lieberman, 15 Canal Street, said he appreciates the discussion about the electrical utilities. He said that the City should consider purchasing only renewable energy and that other municipalities are doing this.

Councillor Lazzaro said she knows that the water and sewer infrastructure is bad. She said she knows people whose basements routinely flood and that it is because of the infrastructure on those streets. She said she is curious to know where the City is and if the City is aware of these problems. President Bears said his understanding is that the system is bad because it is one of the oldest systems. The City is also not responsible for water and sewer on private ways. He said that the Water and Sewer Commission and DPW are also working on an assessment of the Water and Sewer System. He said that retained earnings for the enterprise fund, and most of the time, the commission recommended that retain earnings be used for rate relief rather than for long-term investments, until the Council decided that we as a Council would not do that any more. He said that the Council approved a loan order for MWRA bonds earlier this month. Councillor Lazzaro asked if the huge percentage of private ways in the City contributes to these problems, and President Bears said yes. He said owners of private ways would need to pay to bring the ways up to code before the City could accept them as public ways, and the residents would be responsible for hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars worth of work.

Vice President Collins said we all have some understanding of the problem and its totality. She said we know we have very old infrastructure and it needs to be repaired and rehabilitated. Councillor Callahan said that she would love to organize one meeting of this committee that is devoted to discussing private ways with the public. President Bears suggested that Councillor Callahan submit that as a paper so it can be referred to committee. He also said that Commissioner McGivern and Director Blake are valuable resources on this topic. He said Commissioner McGivern said that this is a mid-hundreds-of-millions or more investment.

President Bears discussed Resident Services and Public Engagement. He said it would included areas of racial justice and equity, the City Clerk, aging, veterans' services, a welcoming city ordinance, and a variety of other topics. Councillor Leming said he appreciates Councillor Tseng's capacity for work. He said he is of the opinion that some of this work should be spread out. Councillor Tseng said he appreciates Councillor Leming's sympathy for his workload. He said he would be happy to distribute some of it. Councillor Callahan said that there wasn't any obvious place to put the work of revitalizing our squares and she thought that this committee might be a good place for that work. She said she could make some suggestions on things we might be able to do. President Bears talked about some previous work on these topics.

Councillor Tseng said beautification is something that has been discussed and that the Council passed some resolutions on it last year. He said that there is also ongoing work on zoning. Councillor Tseng said he would like to work with the Administration to identify possible internship opportunities for public school students in Medford.

Councillor Callahan moved to refer the governing agenda to each of the committees (Councillor Leming second)—approved on a roll call vote of seven in favor and zero opposed.

Vice President Collins said it made sense to keep a close eye on this document and to check in with committee chairs frequently, and to review this governing agenda monthly, and so moved, including reviews in June and December, and to adjourn, at 7:30 p.m. (Councillor Tseng second)—approved.

President Bears adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.