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What are your top three priorities for the city as mayor?

1. Fix City services. We need to rebuild our municipal workforce after years of neglect and decline, in order to provide the programs and services residents, businesses, property owners, workers, and visitors depend on. We need to instill a culture of innovation and creativity and eliminate obstruction and indifference in our constituent services. 2. Get more housing built – especially affordable housing. We can't solve the nation's or region's housing crisis by ourselves, but we should do our part. I support sensible upzoning in transit areas and density bonuses. 3. Safe streets – including repaving street surfaces and fixing sidewalks. No matter how you get around Somerville, you should be safe while doing so. A big part of that is our street surfaces and sidewalks. I want to increase our annual expenditure on street resurfacing and sidewalk reconstruction. (If we got a fourth, mine would be rats.)

What's your plan to improve safety, cleanliness, and walkability in business districts?

First, a big part of the problem is that one in five DPW positions is vacant thanks to a long-delayed collective bargaining agreement, held up for years while we waited for a municipal compensation study. Those union workers on an expired contract received one-percent cost of living adjustments for years during a period of high inflation. We lost large numbers of skilled employees, and rebuilding our municipal workforce by filling these open positions must be a priority. We need to ensure that everyone who lives, works, or visits any part of Somerville is safe, period. This means increasing community policing and getting our police out of their cruisers and walking beats or at least on bikes. It means increased outreach and engagement efforts.

Regarding keeping public space free of encampments, please see my newsletter:

https://www.jakeforsomerville.org/public_space_is_for_everyone In short: Statue Park and most of Seven Hills Park in Davis Square are owned by the MBTA, not the City, so they don't follow normal city park hours and we have limited control. Somerville also has no anti-camping ordinance, and homelessness itself is not a crime—arrests would neither hold up in court nor solve the issue. The City, working with the Somerville Homeless Coalition, is seeking a voluntary resolution, but if that fails, I believe it should move personal belongings left in public spaces to keep public space open for everyone. Any removal must be done humanely, with belongings stored for retrieval, to balance compassion with the principle that public space should remain public.

Commercial development had been robust in Somerville but with the economic slowdown commercial development and housing developments have ceased. In spite of this slowdown the City Council recently voted to increase linkage fees even though Somerville already had the highest fees including permit fees and inclusionary housing percentages in the State. How are you going to encourage developers to build, rather than go to other cities with lower linkage, fees, permit fees and inclusionary housing percentages? What incentives would you offer

We should make sure we're competitive with neighboring communities while avoiding a race to the bottom. I serve on the Winter Hill Civic Advisory Group that oversaw the urban renewal process for 299 Broadway – the old Star Market site in Winter Hill. I know the tools we used to unlock a really good new development set to break ground this month. It will transform that derelict property into a six-story mixed-use development, with retail and restaurants on the ground floor and five stories of housing above that. The housing will consist of 319 rental units, with 136 of those being affordable – including many two- and three-bedroom units offered at 30 percent and 60 percent of area median income. The tools we used – a 20-year Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) scheme, \$4 million in cash subsidies from linkage fees in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and creativity around a \$1 million MassWorks grant with the Somerville Community Land Trust – helped the project pencil out for the developer. I want to see us use these tools elsewhere in the city, where applicable, to make other really good developments a reality.

There is approximately 3 million square feet of life science space that is unoccupied in the city. What are your strategies for filling empty lab spaces?

I've talked to our Economic Development Division folks about our strategy, and that's currently to partner with Boston and Cambridge to send representatives to biotechnology and pharmaceutical conferences. I suggested an alternative approach of sending our own dedicated representative to these events to sell Somerville specifically. My reasoning is that we're competing with Boston and Cambridge, so partnering with the competition doesn't seem as beneficial to us. I would get someone who knows how to network and build relationships with European biotech and pharma executives, and send them over to the European Biotechnology Congress and the European Pharma Congress to convince them Somerville is where they need to be to have a presence in the States. And I would do the same with someone skilled at the same with American biotech and pharma executives and send them to the BIO International Convention and domestic conferences. Somerville has a unique story to tell, and their employees are going to want to live here. So let's use that to sell Somerville. We also should be in regular contact with executives at Northeast biotech companies experiencing growth to have Somerville in their heads as a potential next headquarters destination if they outgrow their current space. While the life science

industry currently is in a downturn, this won't be the case and we would do well to be in position to draw some growing companies to Somerville. I'll explore the possibilities of tax breaks for the owners of life science buildings if it helps them bring in tenants. If the tax break isn't more than what we'd expect to get in property taxes on a vacant lab building, it makes sense to do what we can to get them tenanted. We need to watch against a race to the bottom, but there's always the possibility that bringing in a big biotech company can be the spark that leads to others choosing Somerville.

How do you plan to balance attracting larger developments with ensuring that independent, locally owned businesses can survive and thrive?

Large developments can be a real boost to our affordable housing stock and allow us to make good use of our land near transit stations. But the redevelopment required can have a really negative impact on our local businesses. Davis Square is a great example, with its many one- and two-story buildings that are ridiculous to have right at a transit hub. But how can we achieve the smart growth we need by adding density in Davis Square while not decimating the local businesses. The reality is that new commercial space will always be more expensive than naturally-occurring affordable commercial space. Many businesses have long-term leases in theory, but demolition clauses mean they can be displaced for redevelopment with little or no compensation. And these local businesses are why people go to places like Davis Square. Neighborhood councils have a role to play in insisting that existing businesses threatened by displacement by a proposed development be relocated permanently or temporarily if they're going into the new development. And they can demand that developers do right by these businesses with the leases they are offered in the new space. I'm also intrigued by the idea of inclusionary zoning for affordable commercial that I want to pursue to make sure we don't end up with a city full of formula businesses with business revenues flowing out of Somerville.

Do you plan to make any changes to local taxes, permits, or fees that directly affect small businesses?

Somerville's local businesses keep money in the community. My administration will undertake a review of all fee schedules and regulations that impact small businesses and evaluate where we can reasonably reduce them to be what fees should be: a tool to cover costs and moderate demand. We will pursue cutting unnecessary red tape on licensing, permitting, and the zoning public process. We'll work with local business owners navigating municipal processes to make sure they always know the next step. We need far better with businesses around construction, particularly anything impacting the sidewalks or parking spots in front of their businesses. Economic Development staff should be regularly attending merchant group meetings to hear directly from business owners about their concerns and what they want to see from the City. I'll also be available as mayor to meet with constituents, including business owners, to hear directly from them. Finally, I want to see us celebrate and promote local business by having Economic Development partner with the Chamber of Commerce and our Main Streets organizations to highlight new and existing businesses in newsletters and on social media.

Why is Somerville so extremely difficult for contractors and builders to obtain permits for construction from Inspectional Services. Inspection wait times have increased. Citizenserve has not been effective in streamlining the permitting process. How will you simplify or improve the permitting/licensing process for new and existing businesses?

This frustrates me to no end and will change if I'm elected Mayor. I believe that part of the issue is cultural, and starts from the top. There's no incentive to get things done quickly or efficiently. Part of the problem is probably due to staffing, I would look at what staffing changes could be made to improve speed and quality of service. We will make sure we're using the right set of features on Citizenserve, such that applicants are getting notified of requirements and next steps throughout the process of applying for a license or permit. We will make sure we have enough staff in ISD to do inspections on a timeline that works for people. As our next mayor, I'll aggressively identify and fix inefficiencies while establishing a culture of respect and service from top to bottom in our municipal government. I have the proven executive experience, the drive, and the attention to detail that we deserve. I get enormous satisfaction out of solving problems, and I can't wait to get to work giving our city the top-quality city services it deserves.

The Condo Conversion Ordinance Amendment: The process was done with no public input during the Fourth of July week. Do you feel this was transparent? Would you have done things differently?

Following Councilor Scott's order requesting changes to the Condo Conversion Ordinance in December 2024, the Administration introduced a proposed ordinance change at the June 12, 2025 meeting. That request was sent to the Legislative Matters Committee that evening and taken up at their July 1, 2025 meeting. That night's committee meeting featured a presentation by City staff, a discussion by the committee, and ultimately the item was Placed on File to be replaced by an amended version at the next regular meeting of the council on July 10, 2025. In the days before that final regular meeting before the summer recess, I spoke with a number of constituents who had questions about the proposed ordinance change and who felt the process had been rushed. I also spoke with multiple colleagues who didn't fully understand the changes. Given the October 1, 2025 effective day of the ordinance, it made sense to table that replacement item and take it up after the summer recess. The goal was to give councilors more time to familiarize themselves with the changes and to allow more time for the public to engage with the proposed change and provide feedback. In the end I spoke to two more constituents over the summer recess and the City Council did not receive any new emailed testimony. The ordinance was approved unanimously by the council at our August 28, 2025 regular meeting. I wouldn't say there was an issue with transparency, as everything is always noticed properly. I do think the

communication issues plaguing the City make it tougher for people to follow what's happening. It's just tough to follow local events, given the death of local media.

The Condo Conversion Ordinance Amendment: If the City has a goal to make housing more affordable, how does making development take longer and have more risk by doubling the tenant relocation payments and the condo conversion waiting period? Do you agree that condo ownership is a way for first time home buyers to get into Somerville?

We absolutely need to do more to support condo construction and create homeownership opportunities. That starts with reforming the permitting process, supporting first-time homebuyers, and upzoning where responsible to do so. However, all of this has to be balanced with the need to prevent displacement. We have a responsibility to make sure that tenants who are displaced are able to remain in Somerville without dramatic, overnight cost increases. The original condo conversion ordinance featured compensation levels that needed to be updated to reflect inflation. It also saw a lot of end-arounds done to avoid paying displaced tenants compensation. So the updated convo conversion ordinance disincentivizes property owners from pushing out tenants and just letting the units sit vacant for a year to avoid paying tenant compensation.

How will you ensure that changes to parking, bike lanes, or public transit projects support—not harm—small business foot traffic and customer access?

We need to ensure that we are actually seeking out the input of businesses around our parking – whether we're removing it, adding it, or simply keeping it as-is. This means city employees taking the time to go out and knock on doors and talk to businesses to determine what they and their customers require in terms of parking intervals. Overall, we need a better approach to city planning that is more comprehensive and strategic. Not every street needs the same streetscape and we need to tailor our parking to meet the needs of the street. I like the idea of prioritizing seniors and those with disabilities for the on-street metered parking spots in front of businesses in our commercial centers during certain times of day.

Some people and businesses in our community say that we have parking issues. How would you mitigate those concerns or change the situation? On recent changes to streets in Somerville would you require after say 6 months of completing a street project a look back with meetings of the people and businesses in the area to see if these changes solved the problem or created more problem?

I like the idea of look-back meetings to see how changes have impacted things, to learn lessons for the future. But it's important to recognize that the investment has already been made at that

point, we need to be more proactive about up-front engagement, not waiting until it's too late to change anything. Tearing out a project done with curbs and concrete isn't practical. So it's crucial to get these projects right in the planning phase.

Why is the city significantly adding numerous traffic calming measures throughout various neighborhoods without input from all residents, businesses and religious institutions? What we are hearing is the city conducts listening sessions but are not hearing what is being said. How would you change that?

A key part of public service is being available to the public. I've done regular office hours and on-demand office hours from the very beginning as your councilor-at-large, and I'll continue being accessible to the public as your mayor. City staff work late on Thursdays, and the mayor should as well, so my plan is to do office hours on Thursday nights whereby constituents can sign up for a slot ahead of time and we'll keep some slots open for walk-ins so people can talk to their mayor. We need to get back to a policy of the Mayor's door always being open. I love being out in the community, so I won't need to hold listening sessions to know what the public is saying. Also, support for the different types of traffic calming can vary quite a bit. I tend to hear mostly complaints about the neighborhood traffic circles in East Somerville, while speed humps enjoy sky-high popularity to the point people can't wait to get speed humps on their street.

What will you do in your elected role to ensure that everyone including businesses and religious institutions in Somerville have equal access to all City services, resources, programs, and meetings? How will transparency play a role?

Local government should make lives better. I'm obsessed with improving government transparency and operational efficiency. In my time on the council, I've spearheaded efforts to simplify and streamline the budget review process and added public input on the budget as Chair of the Finance Committee. I've also worked to increase community involvement in decision-making. In pursuit of greater efficiency and productivity, I've pushed for improved interdepartmental coordination and creative solutions. As mayor I'll establish a culture of process refinement to examine whether we're serving constituents in the best way possible.

Currently city meetings (virtual) do not have participation features such as raise your hand button, chat features and restrict participants visibility to see who is in the meeting. Do you feel this is open and transparent? Please explain your reasoning. Also, as Mayor, would you require that all city meetings including all city council committee and board meetings be held in public with a virtual component and that all elected officials be required to attend in person all meetings in public?

We should certainly allow people to see who else is in the meeting, and allow public participation when appropriate. There are mechanisms for public written comment (which we need to do a better job of sharing beforehand) that are more transparent than a chat feature, which I worry would be distracting. City Council meetings would be subject to the Council's rules, so it would be inappropriate for me to opine as Mayor. I would set a policy that we will find space for boards and commissions to do hybrid meetings with commissioners in-person in compliance with state law, should they wish to have an in-person meeting option.

What would you like to see from local associations in terms of working positively and proactively with you and your office? How can organizations like the Somerville Chamber of Commerce be an asset to you as mayor?

Throughout my campaign, I've actively engaged with business groups like the Davis Square Merchants Association and our Main Streets groups. I would seek your input on a range of issues impacting businesses, development, and permitting, and my office door would be open to meeting. I would value your input on policy development and look forward to continuing to build a strong relationship. And where we find ourselves in disagreement, I'll be up front about those differences while still listening to your concerns fully.