

# Somerville Commission for Women



## Commissioners' Introduction

Produced by the Office of Somerville Commissions

- Somerville Commission for Women
- Human Rights Commission
- Multicultural Affairs Commission
- LGBT Community Outreach & Issues



## **Office of Somerville Commissions**

- Somerville Commission for Women
- Human Rights Commission
- Multicultural Community Outreach & Issues
- LGBT Community Outreach & Issues

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# Somerville Commission for Women Ordinance

The powers and duties of the commission shall include the following:

1. insure the equal status of women in educational, economic, political, health, legal and social spheres.
2. design and implement programs that promote equality for all women in the city.
3. develop recommendations and recommend policy to all departments, divisions and agencies of the city, including the mayor and the board of aldermen.
4. coordinate activities of all departments and divisions of the city government on issues affecting women.
5. initiate and coordinate and monitor the enactment of legislation which promotes the equal status of women on the city, state and federal levels, and to assure that appropriate regulations are adopted and enforced pursuant to such legislation.
6. investigate, within the limitations of available resources, incidents of discrimination against women.
7. appear and speak for and act on behalf of individual women and groups of women

The ordinance is the order passed by the Board of Alderman that tells purpose of the commission, gives its powers for investigation, and states its responsibilities for public meetings.

confronted with incidents of discrimination, within the limitations of available resources.

(8) obtain from city departments, divisions, and agencies, information necessary to carry out the functions, purposes, programs, and activities of the commission.

(9) initiate public exhibits and media events in city hall, city libraries, and other city-owned property as well as in other locations within and without the city.

(10) raise funds for the use of the commission and to accept money, gifts and services for its exclusive use and expend or use the same, and subject to appropriation or to receipt of such money, gifts, and services, employ clerical and technical assistants or consultants; and to be consulted by and make recommendations to the mayor with regard to the employment of the executive director.

(11) be a member of the National Association of Commissions on Women.

(12) recruit and recommend prospective commissioners for subsequent appointment by the mayor.

(13) appoint task forces to assist the commission in its operations.

(14) other powers and duties as may be agreed on by the mayor and the commission.

Source: **Sec. 2-287**.Ord. No. 1988-3, § 3, 3-10-88

## Brief History

The Somerville Commission for Women was created in March 1988 by City ordinance. The commission had a part-time staff person until a consolidation of commissions' staff in 2009.

In a recent interview with one of the founding commissioners, the “purpose of Somerville Commission for Women was originally focused on issues such as: 1) specific instances of overt sexism, 2) lack of community support on domestic violence, 3) response for women’s issues were not dependable and needed guidance, 4) pay equity, domestic violence, rape, women and girls who need a voice, and the need someone to speak to these issues, 6) finding diverse representation on the commission because it hard to be voice for all women with very disparate groups in Somerville.



Park Street Mural by Be Sargent (Close-up)

# Commission

## Projects & Events

The Somerville Commission for Women has been active for over twenty years. The below are a list of past and current projects, events, legislation the Commission has organized or participated on:

- ◆ Jumprope-a-thon Event
- ◆ March Women's History Month Reception
- ◆ October Candlelight Vigil for Domestic Violence Month
- ◆ Teens Against Dating Abuse (TADA)
- ◆ Multicultural Immigrant Coalition Against Violence (MICAV) (member of coalition)
- ◆ Anti-Violence Taskforce
- ◆ Paid Sick Days Legislation (member of coalition)
- ◆ Equal Pay Legislation (member of coalition)
- ◆ Financial Literacy Taskforce
- ◆ City-wide Community Money Fair
- ◆ Somerville Clothesline Project
- ◆ Women's Health Workshop on Menopause with Our Bodies/Ourselves

# Commissioner Membership

## Current Membership

- Michelle Albert
- Nancy Bacci (co-chair)
- Marie-Annett Bernard (incoming)
- Alicia Byrd
- Correen Demers (co-chair)
- Chien-Chi Huang
- Katie Wallace (past chair)

## Becoming an SCW Commissioner

Commitment to the commission is key and all gender expression is welcome.

The following is the step-by-step process to become a commissioner:

- must be a Somerville resident
- must attend at least three consecutive meetings
- must complete and submit an application to the co-chairs of the commission
- give interviews to the commission, the Mayor, and to the Board of Alderman
- appear before the City Clerk or at an assigned Board of Alderman's meeting to sign in as a commissioner



## Commission 101

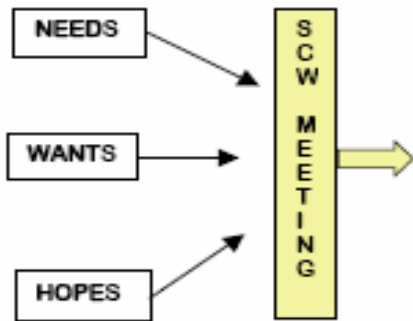
The commissions are important to involving residents in the processes of the City to identify needs and priorities for key communities. Each commission has similarities such as working together to protect people's rights, raise awareness about important issues people face, and to educate the community and leaders.

The Commission for Women focuses its attention to protect women's resources, rights, and needs. The Human Rights Commission has a primary goal of educating about basic human rights but also has responsibility for investigating complaints of violations of human rights. The Multicultural Affairs Commission focuses attention on diversity issues and support to the immigrant community. The Commission for Disabilities works on projects and issues that impact people with disabilities.

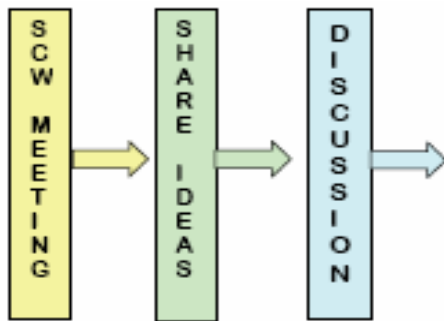


Wall of Respect by Be Sargent, Davis Square

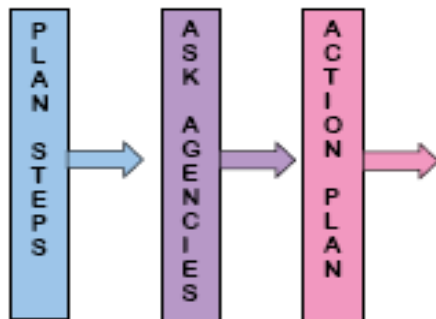
# Commission Process to Move Ideas in to Action



The commissions are excellent places to bring important ideas from their own experiences and also from what they know from their family, friends and neighborhood.



The commission meets to discuss the needs and issues at the monthly meeting. Many people are new to the community and learn a lot about how the City's elected officials, staff, and residents work together to find the highest priorities.



Once the commission has found the high priorities, they determine how to raise awareness about the issue, assist a change in policy, support a local agency, or create a workshop to help educate about the issue.

# Collaboration & Teamwork

After the commission determines the highest priority to work on, an individual commissioner or a small group will meet in a sub-committee to work on the details of what can be done including dates, times, possible sponsorships, experts to bring in to the event, and how else to proceed. The staff support the commissioners with information, office resources, connecting to allies in the community, referring experts to the commissioners. The process is about people working together.

## Commission Action

The process is collaborative and supported by the staff and agencies who work on the issues the commission is concerned with. The commission involves their City staff to help raise awareness within the City and to support education efforts in the community.

EVENT

WORKSHOP

PROJECT

TASKFORCE

PROGRAM

RESEARCH

POLICY



Old Fashion Square Directional,  
Powder House Square

# Commission Staff Support

## Office of Somerville Commissions Staff

- ◆ Sonja Darai, Director
- ◆ Raffi Freedman-Gurspan, LGBT Liaison

## Overview of Responsibilities

The Office of Somerville Commissions (OSC) is located within the Health Department. Resources are shared among the various programs within the Health Department. The Director is responsible for supporting several commissions including the Somerville Commission for Women.

In addition to commissions' support, the Director is responsible for human rights complaints, representing the Mayor as a board member of CAAS, serving on the hiring committee for the Police Chief, supervising the LGBT Liaison, conducting community surveys specific to target populations covered by the OSC, managing the Snow Removal Committee, and managing the Somerville Community Health Outreach (SCHO) which is a new pilot program. The staff assist commissions with organizing events, activities, projects, and taskforces. The staff can also facilitate taskforces if the Commission assigned this with the staff.

The staff are normally responsible for ordering office supplies, communicating to support resources within the City, connecting with Communications Department staff, and representing the Commission at coalitions or networks requested by the Mayor, Health Department, or the Commission.

The Office of Somerville Commission supervises additional temporary staff, occasional federal work study students, scholars, interns, and volunteers.



Wall of Respect by Be Sargent,  
Davis Square



Wall of Respect by Be Sargent, Davis Square

**Somerville  
Commission for Women**

**Commissioners'  
Manual  
Appendix**

**Robert's Rules (Brief Version)**

# **Robert's Rules of Order Summary Version**

## **For Fair and Orderly Meetings & Conventions**

Provides common rules and procedures for deliberation and debate in order to place the whole membership on the same footing and speaking the same language. The conduct of ALL business is controlled by the general will of the whole membership - the right of the deliberate majority to decide. Complementary is the right of at least a strong minority to require the majority to be deliberate - to act according to its considered judgment AFTER a full and fair "working through" of the issues involved.

Robert's Rules provides for constructive and democratic meetings, to help, not hinder, the business of the assembly. Under no circumstances should "undue strictness" be allowed to intimidate members or limit full participation.

The fundamental right of deliberative assemblies require all questions to be thoroughly discussed before taking action!

The assembly rules - they have the final say on everything!  
Silence means consent!



Obtain the floor (the right to speak) by being the first to stand when the person speaking has finished; state Mr./Madam Chairman. Raising your hand means nothing, and standing while another has the floor is out of order! Must be recognized by the Chair before speaking!

Debate can not begin until the Chair has stated the motion or resolution and asked "are you ready for the question?" If no one rises, the chair calls for the vote!

Before the motion is stated by the Chair (the question) members may suggest modification of the motion; the mover can modify as he pleases, or even withdraw the motion without consent of the seconder; if mover modifies, the seconder can withdraw the second.

The "immediately pending question" is the last question stated by the Chair! Motion/Resolution - Amendment - Motion to Postpone

The member moving the "immediately pending question" is entitled to preference to the floor!

No member can speak twice to the same issue until everyone else wishing to speak has spoken to it once!

All remarks must be directed to the Chair. Remarks must be courteous in language and deportment - avoid all personalities, never allude to others by name or to motives!

The agenda and all committee reports are merely recommendations! When presented to the assembly and the question is stated, debate begins and changes occur!

**Source: [www.robertsrules.org](http://www.robertsrules.org)**



Old Powder House



Site of First American Flag flown by  
George Washington (Jan 1, 1776),  
Prospect Hill Tower

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