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[ Live Captioner Standing by ] .

>>Okay, everyone. We are going to get started. So welcome, everyone, and thank you for joining us. My name is Victoria, and I'm the coordinator of the City Hall meetings. I would just like to note that live transcription is available tonight for those attending via Zoom. If you would like to see the captions, select the CC captions button.

Before we begin, bathrooms are located straight out to the left, elevators straight out to the right. Everyone is welcome to refreshments. We just ask that you enjoy them outside of the auditorium.

Tonight's City Hall community meeting is in a hybrid format. So in addition to those here with us at Somerville High, others are via Zoom. We do have a pretty packed agenda tonight. Presentations will not be taking too deep a dive into any given subject, and we will primarily focus on main updates. For the sake of time we have established a process for taking questions. Once each speaker finishes their presentation they are going to take up to 2 questions from our live audience. Please raise your hand in person, if you have a question and a staff member will come over to you with the wireless microphone so you can ask your question. Presenters, please repeat all in- person questions to ensure those on Zoom, because their microphone is right up here.

After in- person questions we will be taking others from online via Zoom. For everyone on Zoom, please write any questions you have in the Q&A section on your screen. Questions will be allowed by myself or a staff member to be answered by a presenter. Please make sure your microphones are on your devices are turned all the way up. We will all do our best to enunciate and speak slowly and clearly.

If we don't get to your question initially don't worry, upon completion of each presentation staff members will be spending a few minutes each doing additional Q&A, on a laptop for Zoom. While not presenting, we do have

multiple other staff members here tonight representing different departments. That includes Somerville Fire Department, ( ) on Aging, Health and Human Services, and the elections department. You will find those on table in front of the room. For those on Zoom, if you have any questions on any of those departments feel free to submit it in the Q&A section and we will make sure your question gets answered. Around 8:00 p.m. the community meeting will come to a close. If you have any remaining questions we ask you to email CM@somerville.gov. For those of you in person, staff will be hanging out after the meeting tonight for additional confers.

I do want to note that this meeting is also being recorded and you can find it on the City TV. I would now like to invite Ben Ewen- Campen.

>>BEN EWEN- CAMPEN: I'm Ben Ewen- Campen, and I'm your representative on the City Council and I also want to recognize Sara Phillips, and I have seen two of my colleagues at large, Kristin, Councilor at Large, and Jake Wilson, and there may be some online, forgive me if I'm overlooking you. So I'm just extremely happy to be here in person again. I think the last meeting of this sort was probably 3 years ago, and in the basement of the high school. So raise your hand if this is your first time to one of these meetings.

Wow. Great. Thank you all. This is a chance to hear from the administration, the good, the bad, and the ugly, and to get questions answered and meet people in person. So thank you for taking the time. You are not going to be hearing from the City Council tonight, but you can reach out to me at any time by email, phone, I will be around here tonight. Now I would like to introduce the Mayor.

>>MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE: Nice to see everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much for coming. The goal of the Ward City Hall Community Meeting, some might remember them as staff, but they are now called the City Hall Community Meetings, is to provide information, access, and community. And also to give you progress for all agenda, which is a commitment to an open and inclusive government.

My pronouns are she/her. I'm really excited to be here in person with you all. I have attended these meetings over the years as a resident, and as a City Councilor, President, and now as your Mayor. So many of you, as I said, have been to these before, and remember them as [ Indiscernible ] meetings. And thank you all for those who are here for the first time. I hope tonight to provide clarity on how City Hall is and can be a resource for you. I also hope it empowers you to get involved in City processes. The goal of these meetings, as I said, is to provide information, access, and hopefully community for the people, you know, who you don't know or who have just come here for the first time, but you get to know them.

So as Councilor said, he said to raise your hand if this is your first meeting. Thank you for that. So I thought we could get to know one another a little. Could you raise your hand if you have lived here under two years?

If you have lived here between two and five years?

If you have lived here between five and ten years.

Between 5 and 10? So how about 10 and 15 years?

Okay. 15 and 20?

If you have lived here over 20 years? Wow! Wonderful.

And how about, raise your hand if you have lived here your entire life.

[ Applause ]

Thank you. Raise your hand if this is the first time in the Somerville High School.

Okay. Okay. I'm sorry. This building. Yes. Thank you.

Raise your hand if you have participated in the SomerVision, which is the City's strategic plan.

Raise your hand if you have participated in the Happy survey.

Raise your hand if you have a dog. If you have a cat. If you have both.

[ Laughter ]

Okay. So raise your hand if you primarily commute by using public transit.

If you walk. If you ride your bike. If you use your car.

Okay. Great. So why don't I throw it out to you all. What would you -- what's a question you would like to know about in the audience?

Does anyone have one?

I'm sorry?

Brad, do you want to answer that question?

>>*BRAD RAWSON*: There are no proposed changes [ Indiscernible ] at this time.

[ Indiscernible ]

>>*MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE*: So what I would like to share also is an understanding of Somerville and how we utilize City resources, which is equally important to residents and staff. So who is here in Somerville?

The City is 4 square miles. Cambridge is 45 square miles. Boston is 90 square miles. Every three years approximately 60% of our population moves out of the City. That's nearly 50,000 people every three years.

Between 2010 and 2020 the population in Somerville rose 7% to 81,000.

50- plus languages are spoken within the City of Somerville. 76% of our population is white, Somerville Public Schools is almost the reverse with a majority/minority school district and over 60% identifying as low income.

[ Indiscernible ] Somerville have increased by a little over 8800 in the last

decade. Vehicles on the road in Ward 3, [ Indiscernible ] Highway, there

are 50,000 vehicle trips per weekday. On Washington Street near Prospect Hill there are 20,000 vehicle trips per week day, that's Monday through

Friday. On near Market Basket there are about 50,000 vehicle trips. Highland Avenue here near the high school there are 12,000 vehicle trips per day.

And of those vehicle trips, 8 out of 10 cars on the road in Somerville do not stop at a residence or at a business. They are just passing through to go to Cambridge or Boston. Our budget has -- in FY13, so 10 years ago, was just under 185 million. Our budget for FY23 is a little over 309 million.

We have 17 City parks that have been renovated in the last 10 years, and on average we plant about 350 trees to increase our urban canopy.

These statistics confirm that we have been through a lot of change in the last decade, and it is up to us to act on how -- on what to do about this.

There are Community Meetings as we are having this evening. They allow -- we are going to allow City department heads to tell their story for you, our residents, and to keep you informed.

Now, access. Access is multifaceted, and we must take every opportunity to ensure it. So you are seeing the construction now. You are seeing the high-rise that is being built in Union Square, over in Assembly, over in Boynton, this construction is being built after 6 years, probably more, but 6 years of City Council involvement on planning where and how that growth should happen.

So in my opinion, as the Mayor, you should have access to those businesses that are coming in here, so we are developing systems in place so the youth have an opportunity to connect starting in the middle schools with these businesses that are coming in here, having paid internships, having year-round employment. We are also wanting to make sure that residents here are also aware of the businesses, and the developments that are happening here.

And those developments are rooted in affordability because we are creating jobs for the people that are here, and we are also trying to create more housing.

We are trying to make this a place where you can live, work, and do business here, and we are working to connect people. This past spring I hosted a forum that connected developers and the unions. It was the first of its kind for a mayor to host such a forum, and I was building off what I did as the City Councilor. In the fall we will have developers, employers, and nonprofits meeting, and I will continue to host these forums twice a year, in the spring and in the fall, to connect groups to develop relationships and develop opportunities. Residents and City staff, residents and local work force, many of the City's major projects include public process to get community feedback.

City Hall Community Meetings are another vehicle for residents to meet, talk, come together on issues that matter most to them. Residents like

you play a key role in the development of our strategic plan, which is known as SomerVision's 2040. The plan captures the community goals, values, and it directly identifies ongoing challenges.

And the goals of this strategic plan is affordable housing, more creation of it, job creation, investing in safe ways to get around the city with mobility and infrastructure, climate change and sustainability, and more. The SomerVision 2040 is in the progress for all agenda.

So first, you asked, how do we create progress for all? The answer is through inclusive leadership, intentional efforts, always viewed through an equity lens. We must make space for all voices, and prioritize those who often feel unheard. Progress for all begins with listening and understanding the concerns. How is it -- so your question is how have I been engaging Somerville, and our community. So through meetings like this, I have held also 10 COVID listening sessions so far with various residence groups to understand their concerns and ideas. I have dedicated a million from the City budget for the first ever participatory working group. The voices of Somerville survey launched in April to hear issues from residents.

I have had probably a dozen meetings with the youth in our City. I have attended multiple City events, talking to residents, whether it's streets or ribbon cuttings or parades.

So what am I hearing? It's hearing about affordability. I'm hearing that the housing and the living costs are high. The COVID impacts, the financial recovery is difficult, health and safety and food access is really important. I'm hearing about social justice issues. I'm hearing about the environment and global warming and trying to do everything that we can to have a sustainable community. I have been hearing about transportation. I have been hearing a lot about City infrastructure, about our school [ Indiscernible ], about our City buildings, about the street surfaces.

And I have been hearing about quality of life, like rodent control and public safety. My administration and City staff have taken concrete steps to address multiple concerns citywide. We have free breakfast and lunch for all Somerville Public School students. And the COVID recovery, for food security and access, we have a Somerville Food Security Coalition, the Somerville Mobile Market, the farmer's markets, and I believe right now we have one left.

We have a Citywide \$15 Snap and EBT match program at the Somerville farmer's market. We have cab to health programs to provide free rides to grocery stores, food pantries, farmer's markets, and medical appointments. Economic development has awarded small -- grants to small businesses. We have free rapid tests if you didn't see them, please pick them up on your way out, and K95 masks available at City Hall and all the libraries.

We have flex funds for rental assistance.

In regards to social progress, we have staffed our racial and social justice department most recently. Our Somerville Office of Immigrant Affairs has expanded to now 6 languages, offered for interpretation and translation. That's Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese Mandarin, and Chinese Cantonese.

We have a historic increase in \$8.4 million in funds into the Somerville Public School budget. That's a 10% increase in their budget. There is no other municipality in the state that has done that.

[ Applause ]

Thank you. You know, what does that mean? In concrete numbers? That means there is 10 additional mental health staff at all levels of the high school for youth, so whether it is behavioral therapists, social workers, redirect counselors, and more. And affordable housing, we added \$8.5 million to the affordable housing trust fund for land acquisition. We have held public housing a district infrastructure financing. It just gives us the ability to build more affordable housing, and that's almost 300 units. Affordable housing, we've added nearly 86 units through some form of inclusionary zoning and through the community land trust. So where are we headed? We're reimagining policing and public safety. We are starting with a public safety survey set to launch, and Denise Molina Capers, our Director of social justice, will talk more about that.

We are also looking to fill positions. So if you can look on the City's website, we are looking for an LGBTQ+ position to be filled, a youth services Director, a health deputy Director, a green clean coordinator, a chief administrative officer, a chief administrative officer is in the for-profit and nonprofit world, you would call that a chief operating officer.

If you have a concern that's not mentioned here tonight, we are here tonight and beyond to always talk to you. Know that we are hard at work in numerous areas, and we are actively assessing all City activities. As I stated in my inaugural address, my pledge to you as Mayor is that I will always have an open and honest conversation with you about issues we face, and our plans to address them.

The City Hall Community Meetings are a vehicle to do just that. Thank you for your participation as we continue to build progress for all in Somerville.

[ Applause ]

Yes?

>>AUDIENCE MEMBER: [ off mic ].

>>MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE: The question is will Somerville have a [ Indiscernible ] center? I committed to creating and building a teen center. We are in the process of organizing that. We are not ready to release any information, but I agree with you, I have lived in Somerville 28 years, I

think 25 of those years I have always heard about Somerville building or needing a teen center. We are going to make it happen. Thank you.

>>*AUDIENCE MEMBER*: [ off mic ]. I am getting my electricity from something called Clean Energy [ Indiscernible ] something outside. In my condo. They were charging me [ off mic ]. As of last month or so, it has gone up to 25 [ Indiscernible ] hours. I'm curious to know if anybody knows if this is [ Indiscernible ] support increasing solar power across or whether I should to look to switch to a different provider.

>>*MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE*: So the question is about providers of solar energy costs. So what I would ask is, I don't know the specific answer to that, and Christine is not here. Can you use the mic? Yeah. Thank you.

>>*EMILY SULLIVAN*: Program manager in the Office of Sustainability and Environment. We are about to present on some information about this, but I'm happy to talk to you after. It depends, we have a Community Choice Electricity program, CCE, and so that's a program where you can participate in the City coordinated electricity purchasing. But I can't tell from your question whether or not you have onsite renewable energy on your apartment building.

>>*AUDIENCE MEMBER*: It is not onsite. It is through [ Indiscernible ].

>>*EMILY SULLIVAN*: How about we connect after, and we can get into specifics. Okay. This was a perfect segue way.

>>*MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE*: So thank you very much. And I will pass it on. Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>>*EMILY SULLIVAN*: Is that better? Okay. Hi, everyone. Like I said, my name is Emily. I work for the Office of Sustainability and Environment. Thanks for joining us tonight. Tonight I'm going to share program updates on 3 different programs that are managed by OSE, the Office of Sustainability and Environment.

So OSE works to improve environmental performance of the City, government, and the community. Implements different programs, projects, and policies to reduce energy usage and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to minimize environmental impacts and ways to adapt to climate change and to foster equity in the community. OSE is a growing department, and there are currently 5 staff members.

So recently, and this kind of relates to the question that I was just asked, recently OSE renewed the City's CCE contract, CCE is Community Choice Electricity. It is a program, it is the City's bulk purchasing electricity program. The City combines consumer power to purchase reliable, competitive, and Clean Energy.

The recent contract renewal doubled the amount of renewable energy in the

CCE program, and the CCE program uses energy that is originally produced and therefore supports regional Clean Energy projects and jobs.

So if folks are interested in joining the CCE program or learn more tonight I have more information and you can come talk to me after. But there are a few important notes to make just about the CCE program.

The first is that there are 3 different levels of varying renewable energy percentages that community members can select from. If folks want to change their level or even opt out of the program, they can do without any penalty. They will never reach out to you either via phone or in person unless it is explicitly requested by you.

And then folks who rent, so renters who pay their electric bill are eligible to participate in the CCE program and they don't need approval from their landlord. So they can just sign up to participate.

The CCE program is a really great way to make an impactful climate action pledge. It is pretty easy to sign up, and again, I'm happy to share with folks after this, if they are interested in signing up.

But there are a couple of other ways that you can participate in climate action or get involved if you are interested. Another way for folks to get involved is the climate and gas program. So Somerville has been doing this for a couple of years now. And so through the Climate Ambassadors' Program residents form a group and learn more about the city's environmental initiatives. They talk to former ambassadors and they complete a capstone project that can become a City program. So it is a great way to become civically engaged or more civically engaged or make an impact on different climate and environmental policies in the City.

So the 2023 Ambassadors Program will start in the beginning of 2023, and it will go through June of 2023. If folks are interested I have a sign-up sheet that you can sign up tonight or there is an online form that you can fill out to give us your contact information.

A big focus of the 2023 Ambassadors Program will be the Somerville climate forward update. Somerville Climate Forward is the City's climate action plan. It is the plan that outlines goals and actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to enhance resiliency to extreme weather events that are made worse by climate change. Somerville Climate Forward was originally published in 2018 so this update process will give community members and residents an opportunity to work with the City to identify new areas to focus on or heightened priorities that the City can embark on for the next, you know, 10 years of climate action.

And so if you are interested in learning more about the ambassadors, CCE, or Somerville Climate Forward I do recommend that you sign up for OSE's monthly newsletter. It is called [ Indiscernible ]. Or I can take down your information tonight. But it is a great way to stay up-to-date on most



recent programs and initiatives through OSE.

So that wraps it up for the sustainability and environment portion of tonight. I would be happy to answer a few questions, if anyone has any questions. But as it has been stated, ... staff will be here after the presentation to answer questions, too. Thank you.

[ Applause ]

Oh, Fred? Thank you.

>>*FRED BERMAN*: Good evening, everybody. I'm Fred Berman. Office of Housing and Sustainability. Thanks for your interest and coming out. First, I want to distinguish the housing division from the Office of Housing Stability. Of course, it is confusing. The housing division is the division of the Office of Strategic Planning Community and Development, which administers the inclusionary housing program which is what the City's requirement that developers make 20% of their housing affordable. They also administer a rehab program, a Lead Program, which is now part of the rehab program. They work with the Affordable Housing Trust Fund which gives money for developers who are creating affordable housing and they coordinate our participation in the State's continuum of care program which addresses homelessness in the State.

So housing stability is the people () of housing. What we do, our goal is to try to prevent displacement, involuntary displacement, and do whatever we can for people who notwithstanding those efforts do need to move to try to help them end up in a place that is housed and is decent housing, as close to Somerville or in Somerville whenever possible.

So that's our primary focus. We also have a policy focus of trying to create programs and policies that will promote housing stability. So I want to tell you a little bit about first of all, I think I should say thank you to all of the residents of the City, and voters who made housing stability a priority. If it weren't for you we wouldn't exist.

[ Applause ]

And housing stability continues to be a high priority for this administration, and of course for people who are constantly facing rent increases and other increased costs. One of the statistics that blows my mind is that prepandemic 69% of housing transactions were in cash. That means that there are -- there were and there are a lot of either corporate buyers or other investors who are purchasing property on a regular basis, and there is constant property turnover, which means that mortgages go up because every time you buy a property and you refinance it, the mortgage goes up, which means that if there are tenants in the building, rents have to increase, and this is a constant phenomenon. It is why we get so many requests for assistance over the past 9- plus months. We have gotten about 1200 requests for assistance, many of them are around accessing

rental assistance, and during the pandemic the State and Federal Government released a lot of funding for rental assistance, and the City, through some of its American recovery assistance program, money has also made considerable funds available for rental assistance.

We have since the pandemic leveraged about \$4.6 million of rental assistance, both for people who have fallen behind in their rents and also for people who need to move and need the startup costs, you know. If you are paying 1500, \$2,000, nobody pays \$1,500 anymore for a one- bedroom apartment anymore. If you are paying \$2,000 for an apartment, then you have to put up first, last, security, and maybe a broker's fee, you have to have \$8,000, which most people who are looking for rentals don't have in their checking accounts.

So we try to help folks who need that kind of help. So one of the things that Mayor Ballantyne mentioned is flexible funding. The State programs have become more and more demanding in terms of requirements, whether it's about income, whether it's about, you know, the quality of the housing, the housing standards, whether it is about immigration status. So we wanted to create some kind of flexible funding that would not only, for example, deal with rental assistance in some cases, but also recognize that people may need some other things taken care of in order to be able to maintain their housing, maintain their employment, etc.

So our flexible funding, mostly, is for rental assistance, but also covers things like if somebody needs furniture, somebody needs moving assistance, if somebody needs some packing assistance in order to move, just things that the Federal Government might not cover, the State government might not cover.

So in addition to -- oh, one of the things that we have also done is we have partnered with the housing authority with a number of initiatives, voucher incentive program. During the pandemic there were many more vouchers given out, but unfortunately, they couldn't find rent within that housing authority's guidelines to use those vouchers. Or maybe they didn't have good credit and landlords, even though somebody came in with a voucher, which guarantees the majority of the rent will be paid by the housing authority, people were rejected for housing because they didn't have good credit.

And so -- or they were temporarily unemployed or whatever. So we created something called the Somer VIP program to pay landlords or -- and/or brokers incentive payment to get them to keep people in Somerville. It was a really high priority. There are all kinds of stereotypes about who has vouchers and, in fact, there are many, many working people who have vouchers, they are not the poorest of the poor, they are not people who don't have a responsible job, they are simply

people who can't afford 1800, 2,000, 2500, \$3,000 for apartments. Anyway, so we work with people. We have case managers who bicultural, bilingual, Portuguese, and Hindi speaking to help people access rental assistance, help people find -- do a housing search, apply for public and subsidized housing. There is public and subsidized housing. Sometimes people have to move out of the City. We try to very hard to make that not happen, but we have a staff of 4 case managers, 4 rental assistants, part-time staff, temporary staff who have done the bulk of the work around helping people access rental assistance.

And we have also created laws, programs and laws to -- sorry, we haven't created the laws, but we work with the City Council to draft the laws something around the Housing Stability Notification Act which ensures that when landlords prepare to evict somebody, they have -- the tenant has information about their rights and resources where they can get help to prevent eviction. We try to work with landlords and tenants to resolve disputes. We certainly try to address prevent evictions that are due to rent arrears. Those are the easiest kinds of situations to resolve, and we also work on other issues around housing conditions, etc.

And we do work with our State legislative delegation. We passed a couple of home rule petitions around a transfer fee to try to increase funding for affordable housing development, a tenant right to purchase, which your City Councilor was active in, statewide coalition, right to council legislation to make sure tenants are adequately represented in court. The statistics that people throw out about how imbalanced the playing field is, that typically 80 to 90% of landlords are represented in courts, it is lower than that, but it has been typically, but it has been higher now because of all the assistance that happened during the pandemic.

And clearly when you are not represented in court, you are much more vulnerable to eviction, and oftentimes people don't even realize that they can advocate to at least delay eviction, if not prevent it by obtaining legal [ Indiscernible ].

So, anyway, I guess I will finish up by saying that we have a contract with Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services and De Novo, another legal services office to help with eviction prevention. We have contracts with the Somerville Homeless Coalition and with community action agency of Somerville to administer rental assistance funds. We have a contract with CAS to complement our housing services and we have a contract with community action agency also for tenant outreach education and organizing to help tenants in building that have been sold to work together to try to advocate with the new landlords to protect their tenants and affordability. I could talk too much longer, so I will stop and see if there are any questions, and I'm also going to stick around at the end.

>>*AUDIENCE MEMBER*: I'm going to start with a clarifying statement and then [ Indiscernible ]. So when you say you are advocating for legislation for [ Indiscernible ] you mean to allow [ Indiscernible ] municipalities to implement [ Indiscernible ] communities [ Indiscernible ], correct?

>>*FRED BERMAN*: That's correct. Because State law, since 1994, when there was a referendum prohibited cities and towns from interfering with the landlord/tenant relationship. So we either need a home rule petition to do that, or we need a State law allowing cities and towns to work on that.

>>*AUDIENCE MEMBER*: I strongly support us being able to do that, and my question for you is if we, the State, allows municipalities [ Indiscernible ] will you [ Indiscernible ] implement [ Indiscernible ]?

>>*MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE*: Thank you for the question. I did, as a City Counselor, and I would as Mayor.

>>*FRED BERMAN*: Sorry. You were in the light.

>>*AUDIENCE MEMBER*: [ off mic ].

>>*FRED BERMAN*: I can't speak to the -- I don't know that the City had any role in ending it, so I plead ignorance. Sorry.

>>*MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE*: So we have given also -- CAS right now is administering about \$4 million in various programs. It is not called -- actually, I'm not sure that it is called CARES, but something along those lines that we have just been evaluating through our funds. But as a large profit, they are administering \$4 million.

>>*FRED BERMAN*: The City awarded a million dollars in what's called Flex ARPA, half is being administered by the Homeless Coalition, and half administered by CAS, and they were administering community development block grants all of which funded rental assistant and still had residual funds, different different amounts in different agencies. And also Community Preservation Act and [ Indiscernible ] so they have a variety of different funds, which they -- which each have different rules, regulations, and use guidelines and they try to use them as effectively as possible.

>>*AUDIENCE MEMBER*: [ off mic ].

>>*FRED BERMAN*: The Welcome Project, which is based at Mystic housing, still maintains its own independent fund to help primarily immigrants and low income immigrant communities, former immigrant communities. And I think [ Indiscernible ] is still administering, I don't know if administering is the right word, but they still help people financially as well as other materially, other ways materially.

Should I do this?

>>We can do one more question.

[ Applause ]

>>*AUDIENCE MEMBER*: Is there going to be any help for people [ Indiscernible ]?

>>*FRED BERMAN*: So -- sure. I'm sorry. I should have been repeating questions. The question was is there going to be any assistance with [ Indiscernible ]. So right now we are able to, when people are faced with shutoff, we are able to apply for use funds for that. We also expect within a few weeks for the low income housing -- low income heating and energy assistance program, which is administered by the Cambridge Department of Human Services for both Somerville and Cambridge, to go into effect, and that's through -- that's through presumably March, middle of -- maybe early April. And they don't have those stipulations about facing shutoff. You basically can get, apply for assistance upfront and there is an allocation that's available, depending on income, that is reasonably good for people who are using electric or gas and not so good for -- not enough really for people who heat with oil, although that's a decreasing number of households.

Clearly, the price of gas is going up, natural gas, so there are going to be some challenges. In addition, we partner with the Department of Health and Human Services, which helps out with fuel, utility assistance. They also, both the HHS and the Cambridge Department of Human Services programs can work with the utility companies to help people get on to payment plans, and if you stay on a payment plan for a year, they will actually forgive some of what you owe. If you are behind, there are discounts rates for people who are eligible for public benefits like SNAP or MassHealth, so people who are facing high energy bills and are low income as demonstrated by participating in other public benefits programs can get discounted rates. And we will work with folks, too, but typically we are focused on the rental assistance rather than utilities, but when we can combine the two we definitely do.

And I'm happy to answer more questions. And I will say that my boss would not forgive me if I didn't say that we have the strongest condo conversion ordinance in the State.

>>*BRAD RAWSON*: I serve the City as Director of Mobility in Mayor Ballantyne's office.

>>Asset management department.

>>*BRAD RAWSON*: So we are going to give about a 5- minute discussion of the infrastructure, mobility, and street safety issues that our teams work on together. We will handle a couple of questions and we will stick around until the end of the program. We have so many incredible departments tonight so we are going to try to be respectful of people's time. So Victoria, give us the hook, because just like Fred, we hope you get the passion and the curiosity and the commitment of public service like Mayor Katjana, all of us, we work in honorable jobs. I hope you folks take pride in our community. Like I said, I'm a resident, Brian is a resident, our kids

go to the incredible Public Schools here, public high school that we helped build a decade from now.

So the first slide please, Nick.

I just want -- it is happening! We did it!

[ Applause ]

This is no accident, folks. There are only one or two or three rail transit extensions in America in any given 5- year period, and one of them is right here in Somerville. And it is because folks like you and your neighbors and your predecessors never took no for an answer. Did I see you here?

3 activists. How many have you been working at this, 20, 25 years? And when I came here 15 years ago you started teaching me and informing me and passing that torch, and together we dared the Commonwealth to not build Green Line Extension. As a community, demanding to fulfill its commitments under the Big Dig legal settlement and deliver rail service to the heart of our community, so good news is happening. Thank you, particularly, to Ward 3 residents who have dealt with so many construction impacts these last 5 years. It has been hard and we acknowledge that and we thank you.

[ Applause ]

Thanksgiving at the latest. My neighborhood in far western Somerville. Magoun Square, on the edge of Ward 3. Somerville Station, kind of that main line to the far western portions of Somerville. It will not open in batches, it will all open at once, and again, so many of us are going to have so many more choices to get to the grocery, friend's house, to the faith community, to youth sports, and not necessarily be riding buses or driving around or walking long distances. So hang in there. We are just about there. And thanks for everything that you have dealt with.

Second thing that Brian and I want to speak about is something that our teams have been working on in partnership and it is the community path. And I hope that folks don't take this stuff for granted. Long ago, there was just a dream in the eyes of local activists to say you know what? We already own all the land for commuter rail, why don't we build the light rail and the sheer walking and biking path and the powers that be, no way, too hard, why would we do that? And because of the stick to it community, we figured out a way to do it. It is under construction, being built by this contractor as part of this contract, it will open up just a month or two after the Green Line itself.

So picture in your mind January 1st, crummy time of year to be opening a community path, and we almost lost it so many times, we all had to work hard and persevere during those moments of budget cuts. We are using this ward- based Community Meeting cycle to educate folks that just because you feel like you have got a bunch of elbow room, [ Indiscernible ]

square, that the community path in our eastern and central neighborhoods is going to feel a little different. It is narrower, tighter, there are fences, there is noise. We should still be proud of it. We just don't want folks to be disappointed when they finally get a chance to walk their dog, or whatever they are doing and say, wow, this is kind of narrow, wow, this is real interesting, ah, how are we going to plow snow from this thing. Operations professionals in the water and sewer group, please, give us the grace, give us the patience to figure this stuff out. It is 3 miles of new rail trail. 5 across the rail lines, it will take us some time to figure out all details. And most communities could never pull this off.

Brian, anything to add?

>>*BRIAN POSTLEWAITE*: You have covered it.

[ Laughter ]

One of the -- one of the key things is that the City was responsible for a handful of crossings along the corridor, and if you can go to the next slide. Just one slide.

So we have been doing some work in the Ward 3 neighborhood, in part to work on some of the crossings, namely here the City was responsible for the Sewall Street crossing. I don't know why GLX gave us the very hardest crossing to do, it is not my favorite crossing in the world. But it will work. And we did get it done before the Green Line opened. And the community path opened. So we are proud about that.

In addition, in this past year we have been worked on putting speed humps through the neighborhood. A couple last week asked why they are so low. We asked the same thing, and our contractor is going to be rectifying that for us.

And then we also put in a new crosswalk over at the high school, and moved the bus stop so that they will work better together to help our students who are coming in on the 88 bus to school in the morning.

But our street construction projects isn't the biggest thing in Ward 3 right now. I'm sure most of you are aware of our Spring Hill construction project is the biggest thing we will be doing here and will be doing for a couple more years. But the key thing is next week, two weeks, a month, November 9th.

[ Laughter ]

We have a Community Meeting to give you all an update of where the project stands, what our work over the winter is going to look like, and what we should expect to be seeing over the next few months to a year as we proceed with this project.

We will find there is a theme, November is a popular month around here. So we also have another thing coming out in November, and that's our stormwater management plan.

Oh, man. I totally messed up that transition.

[ Laughter ]

Oh, good save. So we have a stormwater master plan that we just finished and pushing out to the community next month. The Spring Hill sewer separation program was kind of a prelude project to this, but this master plan covers the entire city, and gives us a roadmap of how to improve sewer separation and stormwater and flooding management throughout the city. And that's going to be issued on November.

Immediately following that we are moving right into our CSO plan. Who here knows what a CSO is? I feel sorry for you all.

[ Laughter ]

So now I'm going to share it for the rest of you. Combined sewer overflow. We have a combined sewer in the city and we are looking on removing and reducing the amount of combined sewer overflow that we contribute to the Mystic and the [ Indiscernible ] River and this plan is going to follow along the stormwater master plan, coordinate with it, and help us figure out how to reduce and hopefully someday eliminate our combined sewer overflows into our natural rivers.

Now we can go back to lead. Thank you.

So we also have a lead, continuing on our utilities theme. And for the past 3 years we have been working to reduce the lead services to individual properties' homes. And we have removed, actually over 150 lead services over the past two years, we are looking to do 100 more next year. But we need your help. If you think or suspect or even don't suspect that you have a lead service, please check our website to find out whether you are on our list or not. If you are, contact us. If the project manager doesn't reach out to you, our construction liaison, Jessica, will talk to you. We will get you on the list. This is a no-charge removal of a lead service line that could potentially be going to your house.

I think that's it. One more? No. I'm good. Thank you so very much. I'm happy to answer questions. And of course as Brad said, we will be around afterwards.

>>AUDIENCE MEMBER: [ off mic ].

>>BRIAN POSTLEWAITE: They are paving -- so the opening of Sewall Street is eminent. I would count it in weeks. Maybe days, but that would be a lot of days.

>>AUDIENCE MEMBER: [ off mic ].

[ Laughter ]

>>BRIAN POSTLEWAITE: Maybe a chain link fence cutting.

[ Laughter ]

>>AUDIENCE MEMBER: [ off mic ]. It has been ridiculous. Every day [ Indiscernible ] sanitary sewer system to [ Indiscernible ] water mains, you



know. [ Indiscernible ] is a mess. Summer Street [ Indiscernible ] is ridiculous. You know, I understand [ Indiscernible ] to go through this, I mean, you talk about [ Indiscernible ].

[ off mic ] should be able to tell what's on the other side of that sidewalk if there is any issues there. So you folks should be doing that. You shouldn't be [ Indiscernible ] basements and wondering, do they have -- because I know there is a lot of [ Indiscernible ] in the area. I have worked in government [ Indiscernible ] I have worked in [ Indiscernible ] government, and you know, it is a shame. We have to live this, you know, and what really bothers me as a resident of [ Indiscernible ] Street is our elected officials, [ off mic ] a visit from a City Council member [ Indiscernible ] to say how are things going, what can we do? Is there anything we can do to help you folks? We don't see it, and it is a shame, and that's really what I would like to say. And I would like to see more people from the City out there visiting and checking on the [ Indiscernible ] through this nightmare of this construction.

I understand it needs to happen, but we would like a little support from the City is all I'm saying. Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>>*BRAD RAWSON*: Thanks very much, Jim. I want to point out Jesse, who is one of our amazing staff, who is constantly talking with residents and contractors and business owners on this project and Jesse has like two dozen other projects. So if you folks are connected if you aren't already. As we said at the top, going to wind down just to get to the next departments. Thank you, Ward 3. You have dealt with so much, whether it is the sewer separation project. And arguably, we could have dealt with two generations ago as a community. I want folks to remember in this moment of the, you know, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. It has been a long time that our society tried to [ Indiscernible ] a little bit natural to us, building transit, renewing sewers, environmental goals like cleaning up Boston Harbor.

I'm sorry we are making up for arguably wasted time, we feel that pain, but I want folks to know we are hiring more and more people every day so we have good communication channels, respect [ Indiscernible ] whether it is bright lights, whether it is noise, disruptions. And Brian, your team has grown by what, like 7 or 8 people in the last couple of years? Mine has grown by 3 or 4 in the last couple of years and we know it is the tip of the iceberg. This community has a vision and expectation of excellence and we need to continue to grow government to meet your expectations. Thanks, everybody.

>>*BRIAN POSTLEWAITE*: Thank you.

[ Applause ]

>>*DENISE MOLINA CAPERS:* Hi, everyone. My teachers always said I didn't need an introduction because [ Indiscernible ] enough. Denise Molina Capers. I am the Director of the Racial and Social Justice Department for the City of Somerville. It is very nice to be with all of you tonight.

So the Department of Racial and Social Justice leads the City of Somerville's equity efforts and collaborates with City departments, constituents, and stakeholders to eliminate the institutional and structural systems that create racial inequities, social disparities, and other injustices.

As you know us today, our priorities include certain initiatives that we have been hyperfocused on. One of those initiatives is obviously to build out the Department, and we were established in 2021 and we have continued to build the Department's capacity. We have recently hired and welcomed new staff members, Amanda Williams, our community engagement specialist, Leonora Galindo, who is here in the center, and I will introduce you further later on, and our publication information officer, Haakon Brooks. So most recently we partnered with several graduate students from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and we recruited youth from the City to help us conduct a short critical participatory action research project. This project involved our youth deciding and talking and researching ways in which the City can have under the RSJ that will allow to be an active part of the decisions that are being made in the City. And most importantly, our reimagining public safety, getting information from our youth about their experiences and perceptions and thoughts. So the youth have almost finalized their study, and they will be presenting the results of this study in November. And we are very excited for them.

We have recently had on September 20th- September 22nd we hosted what is known as PFA, Psychological First Aid. And partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services we hosted two Psychological First Aid training sessions for City staff, front line workers, community leaders, and when I say community leaders I mean your neighbor down the hall that you trust and you talk with and you get resources about things that are happening in the City where you can go and access something. Anyone who supports Somerville residents and workers. The trainings were held via Zoom and facilitated by [ Indiscernible ] Riverside Community Care, we had 130 individuals preregister for the 4- hour training and over 90 participated in two days. Next week we will be hosting the second whatever of that which will allow those persons whose the first session of training to now practice what they learned in the first session. And we hope to continue providing these kinds of developments for our community. As far as the hate and bias incidents are concerned the community, again, had requested that the RSJ to monitor the establishment of a system for

reporting, investigating, and referring hate and bias incidents. As you know, we were approved to hire an RSJ investigator to which we will be posting the position soon. We are in the process of implementing our case management system that is known as File Bind, and with this tool we will be able to track incident complaints filed with RSJ, 311, and other partner area that receive complaints from constituents and we are able to customize File Binds to track all relevant information to these cases and keep in contact with those who have filed the complaints with them personally and on time and consistently.

Our reimagining public safety staffing and operations analysis, we have completed the first phase of initial meetings and fact-finding and we are simultaneously with the interviews, data collection and analysis. The next and final phases will include recommendations and development, report development, and presenting the findings to the community.

Our community visioning focus groups have been ongoing since August of this year, and dates for participation will be updated on the RSJ website. Now that we also have a public information officer we will be able to set up micro pages that will give you specific information to the specific initiatives that you are looking for, and how to engage with those as well.

For the community vision focus groups you can choose to put a group together and we will work with you to make that as easy as possible, or you can come in and join a separate group as an individual.

The policing and public safety perceptions survey has been published in 6 different languages. It is posted online, it is also available as a hard copy, and this evening, [ Indiscernible ] has brought some hard copies with her, if you are interested in filling out the survey before you leave. We also welcome people to call us directly by request, and let us know how is it best to get that survey to you to fill it out.

We will be door knocking in the wards, we will be having public meetings where you can be a walk-in and fill out the surveys, so there will be many opportunities for people to engage and participate in these ways to share your thoughts and perceptions.

RSJ community ambassadors will be announced November 22nd, the ambassadors will play a critical role in the outreach and empowering, especially our most vulnerable who are seldom heard from. We have officially put together the committee of evaluators that will be responsible for reviewing applications submitted and helping to choose the candidates that best represent the diversity and lived experience of all the constituents to help us do this work.

The RSJ fund was also put under the RSJ department to provide sustainable and enduring source of funding to dismantle systemic racism and social inequality. The funds resources will be used to support efforts of

individuals, organizations, and other agencies to address the impacts and deconstruct the underlying causes of racial inequality and social injustice. We are putting together the application process and the preproposal process, so that we are able to support any and everyone who is open to and has ideas about doing this kind of work. So we are making sure that we are providing language access and also just access in general, because not everyone has written a grant.

So the RSJ department is tasked with creating [ Indiscernible ] in Somerville. So the task force will be announced in November. This task force will be trained and formed and knowledgeable about what a [ Indiscernible ] oversight is and how it functions across different models. Their recommendations will align this knowledge and awareness with the needs of Somerville as a city and as voiced by its constituents. We decided to create this task force in order to increase transparency, public trust, and confidence in the process. This task force will bring together representations from Somerville community and experts on this subject matter to inform the decisions around civilian oversight.

The commission, the Human Rights Commission and the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities has 4 open spots that they are recruiting for, and we will leave those spots open until they are filled. ADA division has completed an internal survey. The majority of the surveyed staff were in their leadership and management positions. The good thing is that they all had some working knowledge of ADA, and that it definitely, the information we received from the survey, this internal survey will inform the professional development that will be developed and implemented on behalf of our ADA expert, Adrian. Currently, she is working to provide professional development around ADA with our City fire department and our city police department. Our fire department will begin to receive training and professional development in October of this month. And finally, the ADA community survey, which everyone here will hopefully receive and be able to fill out, will come out in November of 2022. And with that, I will take two questions, and we will also be available afterwards for anyone who wants to speak with me.

>>AUDIENCE MEMBER: [ off mic ].

>>DENISE MOLINA CAPERS: I will defer specific questions on that to the Chief. I will say that part of the work that the RSJ department is doing is collecting a lot of data in different areas, and part of what we are aiming to do is to create a part of our website where there is, we call it a resource page where you would be able to get specific data around different subject areas. So it is important to me to hear that because if we didn't already have a plan to have that specific data available, now we can add that to the list of information that our constituents want to know about. But Chief, if

you want to answer that question now or ...

>>*MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE*: To your first comment, you can send your ideas and thoughts to CM, that's Community Meetings, so CM@somervillema.gov. Thank you.

>>*DENISE MOLINA CAPERS*: Sorry. I was supposed to repeat the question. The question was do we have any data around the justice program. And specifically the demographics that are being -- that are in the program or taking advantage of the program or -- yeah. Did I get that right? Sorry.

I know there was one more question.

>>*AUDIENCE MEMBER*: [ off mic ]. Where do the additional funds come from?

>>*MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE*: It is identified in the budget. So I can talk to you about it. But it is usually within the first 5 pages, it tells you where -- in the budget book it tells you where all the revenue is coming from. It is a combination of real estate taxes, primarily residential, commercial, fees, like [ Indiscernible ] fees, parking fees. It's in the front of the book or online, it is in the first couple of pages.

>>*DENISE MOLINA CAPERS*: I will hand it off to our chief.

>>*CHIEF CHARLES FEMINO*: Welcome. My name is Charles Femino. I went back into the private sector in the world of higher education, practice of law. And [ Indiscernible ] PD in 2020, and will be here until your new permanent chief is chosen.

I tell you that because when I left and after returning, it is a very different Somerville. It is a Somerville that the needs and wants of the communities, you people, have changed dramatically, and I have seen that in the gap of time that I have left. And I work very closely with Denise, I have been meeting with her on a weekly basis, since she came to Somerville in the concept of reimagining public safety. There is a lot of changes that have been made. We have been working together on a weekly basis, and the best is yet to come. As she mentioned, there is a staffing and operations analysis and hopefully as the recommendations that come out of that staffing and operations study come out, we will be able to change the policing in Somerville so that it meets the needs of our community. Before I make comments on crime stats I want to mention a couple of concepts of interest and topics of conversation over the last year or so.

Community policing, I'm often asked where is the community policing, where are the offices of the program, which initially started back in the '80s, was a model at one point for other communities, cities, and towns around surrounding areas. It was originally 14 offices based on reductions through the years, it turned into a 7- person staffed unit with a sergeant,

and based on our current needs now with the department, unfortunately, that unit has been disbanded. The offices have been reassigned to patrol division to staff the patrol vehicles. We are hoping that as staffing analysis comes out recommendations that come forward, we are trying our best to reestablish some type of community outreach program with the community police officers.

School resource officers, again, that program has been ongoing through the years, as many of you who have been here for years know. At this point it has been put on pause based on a school committee vote. We are in discussions currently, in discussions with the school committee and the administration on bringing back some type of a school resource officer program, as well as the steps program, which was offices who were assigned to the grade level schools who follow the schools grade levels up to the high school, and each year those officers will visit the schools in a nonenforcement, positive relationship- building role and we will try to bring that back at some point.

We talk about the accreditation, the police accreditation, for those of you who know what an accreditation process is, the Somerville Police Department was originally accredited in 2019, we have to be assessed every [ Indiscernible ] years. In June we were reaccredited. That basically best practices that are established by the Commission, the Mass Police Accreditation Commission, and it is about 380 standards, about 250 of those standards, roughly 250 mandated, the rest are optional. Somerville is one of the largest cities in this area in the northeast to be accredited, and so what does that mean? Every 3 years the assessors come in, they spend 3 days to make sure that we are not only saying that we are doing something, but actually proceeding and practice what we say we do.

Police reform, as well as you all probably know, passed in 2020. Primarily meant for transparency and accountability in policing and law enforcement, well overdue. It's the most important, I mean, we could stand all night speaking about police reform, but they passed about 27 different and new reform [ Indiscernible ] for the police department to follow in Massachusetts. I think the most important one in my personal opinion is that it now mandates every officer in the Commonwealth to be certified as a police officer in good standing, but more importantly, it also creates a practice and a move for decertifying police officers, and that process occurs every 3 years. So every 3 years based on the alphabet of where an officer's last name stands, their disciplinary files are submitted and is reviewed by this Commission. And there has been officers already decertified or will not get recertified as a police officer in Massachusetts. And as a part of that, all of those disciplinary files as an oversight for the

Commonwealth are put into a centralized database, a nationwide database, and what that does, if an officer for some reason leaves Somerville PD and tries to go to another department, whether it be in the Commonwealth or elsewhere, those disciplinary files can be checked with this nationwide database. So it allows for accountability for police departments to hire only those qualified police officers that are candidates.

Turning to your crime stats for the Ward, citywide has increased 10%, and about 11% over 2 years.

[ Captioner logging off ]