

*What made you interested in joining the commission?*

About nine months ago, I started paying attention to the workings of Somerville's city government. I've been gradually getting more engaged with the community by attending city meetings, talking to other community members, and sometimes sharing my thoughts on Twitter or by writing to city councilors. This winter I learned a lot more about the work of the commission and about how much more help is needed for its important work. I think this is a place where I can make a positive contribution to my city and my community.

*Do you have lived experience of being a person with a disability?*

Yes.

*What are two major accessibility concerns you have in the city of Somerville?*

My biggest concern is the safety of our neighbors in the face of CoViD-19. The pandemic is still happening, and the virus will continue to present a significant danger for a long time to come. The push to "move on" and remove protective measures is exclusionary, effectively banishing from public life all those at high risk or who don't feel comfortable without those measures in place. That's bad in itself, but this isn't just a concern for the immunocompromised: we don't fully understand the long-term effects of this disease, but we do know that "Long CoViD" is real, serious, and could happen to anybody. If we don't continue to take this disease seriously, many more people will suffer serious harm.

Another major concern I have is mental health treatment. It is unreasonably difficult for a person in need to find a therapist or psychiatrist, and the pandemic has only worsened this problem. The process of finding providers is arcane and inconsistent, even before you account for the fact that many conditions necessitating mental health treatment make it harder to achieve the very steps that the process requires.

*What other ways are you engaged in the community? (Somerville, disability)*

I spend a lot of time and energy offering emotional support to neurodivergent friends. As I mentioned above, I'm also engaged in city government, particularly by attending city council meetings.

*What skills would you like to bring to the group?*

I am good at absorbing complex information and explaining or summarizing it at different levels of nuance. I'm willing to ask "obvious" questions, to make sure undue assumptions aren't being made and that assumptions that are in place get stated explicitly. And I am able to listen to different perspectives, change my mind, and admit when I'm wrong.

*Do you have interest and availability to serve on sub-committees/workgroups as the commission works to become more empowered in the city?*

Maybe. I want to contribute but I don't want to overcommit myself, so I would decide whether to take on projects like this on a case-by-case basis.