



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:00 p.m. and adjourned at 6:59 p.m. on a Roll Call Vote: 4 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Kelly, Wilson), 0 opposed, 1 absent (Councilor Scott).

Others present:

Michael Potere – Assistant Clerk of Committees; Kim Wells – City Clerk; Barbara Brown – Benefits Manager; Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison; Francis Gorski – Chief Financial Director, Somerville Public Schools; Alan Inacio – Director of Finance & Community Development; Erik Larson – Energy Manager, Office of Sustainability and Environment; Julie Spurr-Knight – Finance and Administration Director; Edward Bean – Finance Director; Catherine Lester Salchert – Acting Special Counsel, Law Department; Susan Yerkes – Director, Parks and Recreation; Jill Lathan – Commissioner of DPW; Melissa Woods – Director of Capital Projects.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Jake Wilson, Charlotte Kelly, Jesse Clingan and Judy Pineda Neufeld
Absent: Vice Chair Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1650](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of November 6, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

Contracts and Easements

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1553](#)) Requesting approval of a time-only contract extension of five months for Suffolk Construction, for Construction Manager services for the Somerville High School project.

Chair Wilson noted there were no additional questions or comments on this Item.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

- 3. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1586](#)) Requesting approval of a thirty-month extension to the Benefit Strategies, LLC contract for Flexible Spending Account employee benefit administration.
 Benefits Manager Brown explained that this Item reflects a request to extend the contract with the city’s flexible spending vendor through December 2025.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

Prior Year Invoices

- 4. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1588](#)) Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$2,205 using available funds in the Human Resources Professional and Technical Services Account for employment medical screens.
 Chair Wilson stated that this Item would be taken together with Item 5 (ID # 23-1587) and noted there were no additional questions or comments.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

- 5. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1587](#)) Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$1,424 using available funds in the Human Resources Professional and Technical Services Account for employment medical screens.
 Chair Wilson stated that this Item would be taken together with Item 4 (ID # 23-1588) and noted there were no additional questions or comments.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

- 6. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1591](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$900 using available funds in the Parks and Recreation Transportation Account for Dilboy Field bus transportation.
 Director Yerkes explained that this Item covers the cost of transporting soccer goals at the end of the soccer season.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1660](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$1,970 using available funds in the Department of Racial and Social Justice Professional and Technical Services Account for transcription services.

Chair Wilson stated that this Item would be taken together with Item 8 (ID # 23-1508). Legislative Liaison Carrillo noted that this invoice was inadvertently sent to SomerViva: Office of Immigrant Affairs (SOIA) instead of the Department of Racial and Social Justice, and that the error has been corrected.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1508](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$500 using available funds in the Department of Racial and Social Justice Professional and Technical Services Account for transcription services.

Chair Wilson stated that this Item would be taken together with Item 7 (ID # 23-1660). Legislative Liaison Carrillo noted that this invoice was inadvertently sent to SomerViva: Office of Immigrant Affairs (SOIA) instead of the Department of Racial and Social Justice, and that the error has been corrected.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

9. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1672](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$718.51 using available funds in the Mayor's Office Maint Contract-Office Equip Account for additional printing needed for Community Meeting materials.

Chair Wilson stated that this Item would be taken together with Item 11 (ID # 23-1669).

Legislative Liaison Carrillo explained that this Item reflects an invoice that was not received in time to pay it in Fiscal Year 2023.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

10. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1640](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$475 using available funds in the City Clerk's R&M - Software Account for ordinance hosting annual support fee.

Clerk Wells explained that this Item reflects the annual fee paid to the website that hosts Somerville’s city ordinances, and that the invoice was delayed due to contract negotiations reflecting additional services the city requested from the vendor this year.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

11. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1669](#)) Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$375 using available funds in the Mayor's Office Food Supplies and Refreshment Account for dinner for staff for FY 2024 budget hearings.

Chair Wilson stated that this Item would be taken together with Item 9 (ID # 23-1672).

Legislative Liaison Carrillo explained that this Item reflects a food budget that could not be invoiced during the same Fiscal Year.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

Grant Acceptances

12. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1581](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a Community Compact Best Practices Technical Assistance grant for \$45,000 with no new match required, from the MA Department of Revenue Division of Local Services to the Economic Development Division for the development of a Commercial Tenant Guidebook.

Director Inacio stated this Item will cover the cost of producing a Commercial Tenant Guidebook that will inform business owners on subject areas such as commercial tenant’s rights, negotiating lease terms, and how to handle property disputes with landlords. Chair Wilson noted this will be useful to empower the city’s small businesses that are renting commercial

space.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

Appropriations

- 13. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1516](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$56,215.42 from the Bike Share Stabilization Fund for installation and startup cost of a BlueBike station at the 74 Middlesex Avenue Development site.

Director Inacio explained that this Item reflects previously approved funding to install a BlueBike station, that this is being funded by private developers, and that this is a request to access those funds.

Chair Wilson asked if this station would include “eBlueBikes,” and Director Inacio replied that the department is working on an overall “eBlueBike” strategy and could obtain additional information to provide to the committee.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

- 14. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1663](#))

Requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$28,200 to the Department of Public Works Snow Removal Account for the procurement of roadway sensors for snow removal equipment.

Commissioner Lathan explained that this will fund the installation of three additional snow plow sensors that analyze the conditions of the road to aid in snow removal. Councilor Kelly asked how many plows the city has, and Commissioner Lathan replied that the number could be provided to the committee. Councilor Kelly requested an itemized invoice for the cost of these sensors, and Commissioner Lathan stated that the information could be provided to the committee.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

- 15. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1568](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$1,370,177 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the 90 Washington Demonstration Project Account for additional legal services.

Attorney Salchert explained that this request will pay the law firm hired to handle litigation pertaining to the Cobble Hill case, and that it covers the period from February 2023 through September 2023.

Councilor Kelly asked if this will be used to pay for an appeal, and Attorney Salchert clarified that it covers a post-trial motion, which was filed with the same judge. Councilor Kelly asked what happens if more legal fees are accrued, and Director Inacio replied that the department will come back to the committee to request additional funding. Councilor Kelly asked if any other money has been paid to this law firm for this particular litigation, and Director Inacio replied that the firm has been previously paid \$800,000, in addition to the funds being requested here. Councilor Kelly asked why this is being funded from “free cash,” and Director Bean replied that the city currently has \$32.8 million in “free cash,” and that it made more sense to use that money than to borrow to make this payment.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

- 16. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1655](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$165,687 from the Energy Stabilization Fund to pay for the final phase of the LED conversion project at the Albert F. Argenziano School.

Energy Manager Larson explained that this request covers the last phase of LED conversion at the Albert F. Argenziano School.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

- 17. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1670](#))

Requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$384,858 from the FY 2024 Tax Levy to the School Department for unbudgeted expenditures relating to the relocation of Winter Hill Community Innovation School students.

Director Gorksi stated this Item reflects the cost associated with getting the Edgerly Building ready for Winter Hill School students, such as setting up wireless Internet, for example. Chair Wilson asked what this request leaves in remaining capacity for supplemental appropriations, and Director Bean replied that, because the city projected \$15 million in new growth but will actually be certified for \$17.5 million, this money will come from that additional unallocated \$2.5 million. Councilor Kelly asked why this is not coming from the School Department’s budget, and Director Bean clarified that this appropriation will go to that budget.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward
 Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City
 Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

18. Mayor's Request Requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$272,970 from the FY 2024 Tax
 (ID # [23-1671](#)) Levy to the School Department to fund forensic services on the School
 Department Information Technology (IT) network.

Director Gorski explained that this request covers an investigation, including a forensic analysis, following a malicious network disruption for the School Department, and which concluded that no information was taken as a result. Chair Wilson asked if a ransom was demanded or paid, and Director Gorski replied that a ransom was neither demanded nor paid.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward
 Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City
 Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

19. Mayor's Request Requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$219,697 from the FY 2024 Tax
 (ID # [23-1674](#)) Levy to various Department of Public Works Accounts to fund unbudgeted
 expenditures related to the Winter Hill Community Innovation School move.

Director Spurr-Knight explained that this Item covers the cost of physically moving and relocating the Winter Hill School, and covers the period from July 1, 2023 through the present. Chair Wilson expressed support for this Item and commended the hard work that went into this relocation.

Councilor Clingan asked if this amount covers hiring additional custodial staff, and Director Spurr-Knight stated that no new custodial staff was hired.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward
 Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City
 Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

20. Mayor's Request Requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$49,974 from the FY 2024 Tax
 (ID # [23-1673](#)) Levy to the School Department School Lunch Revolving Fund for providing
 meal services to participants in summer programs run by the Parks &
 Recreation Department.

Director Yerkes indicated that this Item covers lunches provided to students throughout the summer, reflecting about \$7,000 per week to feed approximately 200-250 children for seven weeks.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward
Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City
Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

- 21. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1661](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$2,502,191 from the Receipts Reserved for Appropriation, Parking Meter Receipts Account to reduce the FY 2024 Tax Rate.

Director Bean stated that this is a standard appropriation taken at this time each year, and that it is the same amount presented to the City Council during the budget review in June 2023. Chair Wilson asked what would happen is this money is not allocated, and Director Bean replied that \$2.5 million would need to be cut from the general fund budget. Chair Wilson noted that this request was discussed during the budget review earlier this year.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward
Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City
Councilor Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

- 22. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1676](#)) Requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$500,000 from the FY 2024 Tax Levy to the Capital-Building Improvements Account to fund needed building improvements.

Director Bean indicated that this Item will cover the cost of repairing the clock tower atop the City Hall building. Councilor Kelly asked if the entire amount would be used for the clock tower, and Director Woods replied that it would, and that investing this amount now means the clock tower will not need to be repaired when City Hall receives additional renovations in the future.

Councilor Kelly asked if additional funding would be requested for future renovations to City Hall, and Director Bean replied that the mayor has indicated that renovating the building is a high priority, and that doing so will require additional funding that will be requested in the future.

Chair Wilson noted that repairing the clock tower was already planned work in the building master plan, and Director Woods confirmed that it was, and that this work is just happening earlier than originally expected.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward
Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City
Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

23. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1675](#)) Requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$8,150 from the FY 2024 Tax Levy to the Public, Education, and Government (PEG) Access Salaries Account to correct a budget miscalculation.

Director Bean stated that this item corrects an inadvertent budgeting error.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: Vice Chair Scott

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2023-11-14 CCFinCom Contract Ext 2023Nov09 (with 23-1553)
- Finance - 2023-11-14 HR Dept Prior Year Invoices (with 23-1587, 23-1588)