



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 17, 2021
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Vice Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Lauren Racaniello-Mayor's Office, Ed Bean-Auditor/Finance, Michael Mastrobuoni-SomerStat, Cortni Desir-SomerStat, Oliver Sellers-Garcia- Office of Sustainability and Environment, Greg Jenkins-Arts Council, Cathy Piantigini- Libraries, Suzanne Rinfret-Parking, Frank Wright-Law, David Goodridge-Information Technology, Ashley Speliotis-Council on Aging, Christopher Hosman-SomerPromise, Ted Louis-Jacques-Veterans and Doug Kress-Human Health and Services.

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Chairperson Scott and adjourned at 9:49 p.m.

1. Review of the FY-22 Budget

Acting Director Ms. Cortni Desir

Personal Services is up 1%, Ordinary Maintenance is down 61%

There were two major changes in Personal Services budget moving the budget manager to finance.

Ms. Desir proposed a new position as 1st Digital Information Officer (DIO) in data transparency and will work with departments to enhancement and engage city staff. DIO FY22 will finalize data investment plan, identify opportunities to move from paper based system to electronic. They hope to have the DIO position filled by September. Councilor Ballantyne asked for an update on the happiness survey. Ms. Desir stated the survey 1st and 2nd mailing went out in May and the staff is collecting responses with several hundred sitting in the office for review.

Councilor Mbah asked for a highlight of how the data will help to inform SomerVision. Ms. Desir stated they partner with OSPCD to provide analytical support and will launch new Vision Zero dashboard. Additionally, the data will be more available, interactive and in an easy to understand format. SomerStat will provide data support and cleaning up data to help inform the steering committee to make decisions.

Councilor Rossetti asked Mr. Bean about the Incident Command position and if the

federal money will assist with the budget. Mr. Bean stated that FEMA paid for the former Incident Commander position 100%. FEMA uses funding to pay for these positions and will not partially fund any position that is not a full time 100% position. It was stated there is a differential of 8 weeks and the FEMA funding will end in September. This information is also indicated on the SomerStat page listing \$5,043. Ms. Desir is receiving the SomerStat pay as director. Councilor Rossetti asked why is this in the budget when FEMA will be reimbursing the city for this amount. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated there are two employees in SomerStat being paid at different rates. Ms. Stelljs is the Incident Commander and is funded by FEMA. The \$5,043 covers the difference between the two salaries, Ms. Stelljs and Ms. Desir for 8 weeks. Chair Scott asked about the new position, vacant analyst position. It was stated that the analyst left last May and the city is advertising to fill as soon as possible. Ms. Desir is doing two positions right now. Chair Scott stated there has been widespread requests for an ADA compliance officer and he will review the request of the proposed Digital Innovation Officer position to consider what is needed the most in the city.

- Office of Sustainability and Environment

Mr. Oliver Sellers-Garcia stated the Personal Services budget is up 20% with a proposed new position for a Community Engagement Specialist that will provide an overwhelming need for more education between the city and many different groups in the community. Additionally, this position would serve as liaison for schools and others. This position would make the most immediate impact with school age children, education and programming. The other position is to build on the climate ambassadors' program with 3 different co-horts and try to recruit people who are not as well represented in the program.

The Ordinary Maintenance budget is up 72%, which is just 4% up from FY20 budget returning to level funding for services that were paused and cut.

Chair Scott asked about OM budget on a certain amount that was transferred out. He stated that \$21,000 was transferred out for Electronic Vehicle charging stations to make available for the public. The \$21,000 cost was just for equipment and the installation was provided by DPW. Mr. Oliver Sellers-Garcia will get back to the Chair with a response on the \$20,000 that stated the funds were received from the state. The charging stations received from a grant which did not happen in FY20 because of cancellation of construction ban in end of FY. Mr. Sellers-Garcia will provide an update in writing to the committee.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia stated we are in a much better path than before. It's a very steep path to climb and putting more resources into energy. In the new construction, the city is on a good path.

Councilor Mbah asked about waste generated that goes to land fields that have reached capacity. He asked for a plan to reduce carbon footprint. Mr. Sellers-Garcia stated the city's waste goes to an incinerator in an energy facility in Saugus that produces much less carbon omissions.

Chair Scott stated he will look very carefully at the new position to balance it out with the needs of the ADA compliance officer.

- Arts Council

Mr. Greg Jenkins stated the Personal Service budget is up 10% for grade reclassification positions for arts coordinator, cultural culinary director and the cultural director.

The Ordinary Maintenance budget costs are unchanged and have been the same year after year.

The arts council distributed back out \$700,000 to the community as COVID grant and racial justice grants. Also did 30 online programs to bring art out to the community.

Councilor Mbah asked Mr. Jenkins about the work with OSPCD as a risk assessment looking at art space in the city. He talked about a buy-back position. Create a cultural arts trust to use some funds to leverage a situation through a master plan.

- Libraries

Ms. Cathy Piantigini stated the Personal Service budget is up 14%.

She proposed two positions for the West Branch library, one librarian generalist and a librarian II.

The Ordinary Maintenance budget is up 22% primarily due to skyrocketing demand for online services over the past year. The budget increased by \$80,000 for e-book, audiobooks and streaming videos. Ms. Piantigini would like to pilot a storefront library. Additionally, they are partnering with local agencies to have services in multiple languages.

Chair Scott asked when will the main branch library be open 100%. Ms Piantigini stated on July 12 the libraries along with other public buildings will be open.

- Parking

Ms. Suzanne Rinfret stated that the Personal Services budget is up 3% due to collective bargain agreement.

The Ordinary Maintenance budget is up 37%, \$150,000 for a parking study for the city and costs relating to modern parking payment system. Additionally, there are a couple of open positions.

Ms. Rinfret was asked about the vacant hearing officer position and if there is an appeals process.

Ms. Rinfret stated people can still appeal on line, emails and there is a workorder through 311. In some cases, the process has gone beyond 21 days due to the pandemic and may go beyond 30 days.

Councilor Rossetti asked about the parking study and if the high school will be part of the study. Ms. Rinfret stated the entire city will be looked at for the parking study.

Councilor Rossetti asked Ms. Rinfret to please remember to include the Central Hill campus area in the study.

Chair Scott asked why the signs budget in technical and professional is down. Ms.

Rinfret stated the reduction is due to new modern technology and easier to install signs.

This year's budget includes over 200 safety zones through the city and 12 blinking signs through the city. The line for Conduent State & Local Solutions Inc. is for the ticket and processing system and they plan to transition to a new system some time in the fall.

- Law

Mr. Frank Wright stated the Personal Services budget is up 9%. They received over 150 new claims and provided over 125 written opinions. The temporary salaries line has increased to \$18,000 to fund legal interns. The chief labor counsel positions have been reclassified.

The Ordinary Maintenance budget has no changes.

Councilor Rossetti requested a change to the line as it relates to providing legal services to the city councilors. The change requested is that the language for the use of the \$25,000 to omit the language as it is stated to use the service as the council sees fit. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated the mayor's office will change the line to read for use of supplemental legal opinion and drafting.

The new line for legal service has been proposed for FY22 for supplemental legal opinion and drafting.

Councilor Rossetti asked about vacancies and there is a vacancy as of June 4th. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated the vacancy list was last updated before the person left the position. Chair Scott asked about the language change that the mayor would need to authorize the payments that go out. Additionally, he asked if there is a plan in place to create a standing contract for outside counsel so they can make use of the work without having the mayor sign off on each request. Ms. Racaniello stated the mayor has to sign off on all city contracts. She will get clarification on the process and follow up with the Mayor and President McLaughlin.

Councilor Mbah asked what is the law office role in terms GLX construction. It was stated that Ms. McGettigan works with the GLX team and some of the property owners to keep the project on schedule along with the construction of the new high school. There were a lot of overlapping for these projects to keep them going and on target.

- Information Technology

Mr. David Goodridge stated the Personal Services budget is up 22% for two new positions: project manager and IT specialist to support email and office 365 applications.

The Ordinary Maintenance budget is up 19% primarily due to increase in software maintenance, cellular equipment and computer equipment lines. Additionally, the Munis renewal is coming up after 3 years. There is an additional line for 3Rate program for power protection in closets for all schools. They are planning to reduce public switched telephone network to get rid of copper lines. Mr. Goodridge stated they will provide the city council with laptops, as well as, DPW and traffic with all of the new positions. Mr. Goodridge stated that generally, they do not use the Dues and Memberships line, but this year he would like to use it to encourage staff to stay current on training and get certified. The new laptops for the city councilors will replace the desktops at the horseshoe and the councilors will be able to use the laptops outside of city hall for local business meetings with the community.

Mr. Mastrobuoni stated that there are 3 changes, 1st HHS salaries temporary \$27,000 adjustment, SomerPromise moved some positions around from off grants from full time to part-time. The home visitor position is not included in the salaries line \$49,000 to

salaries line. SomerPromise position was only funded for 60%. In HHS \$27,000, SomerPromise \$70,000 increase.

- Council on Aging

Ms. Ashley Speliotis stated Personal Services is up 3% .

Ordinary Maintenance is up 2%.

Council on Aging created a transportation service that provided over 4,000 rides to meet the needs of the seniors. They booked over 1,500 appointments and helped people move to senior buildings. There is a need to expand mental health programming for older adults.

- SomerPromise

Christopher Hosman stated Personal Services is up 34% and Ordinary Maintenance is flat.

SomerPromise has direct support for immigrants, childcare assess and affordability community childcare. They conducted childcare visits to 133 family homes with each one getting 1-3 visits.

Councilor Ballantyne asked all the programming they are working on and if they address the reading academics for 3rd graders in Somerville. It has been said that 3rd grade is a key period for learning. SomerPromise partners with Out of School Time and is slowly shifting to supporting families.

- Veterans Services

Mr. Ted Louis-Jacques stated that Personal Services is up 8%.

Ordinary Maintenance is up 12%, returning to pre-pandemic levels to support upcoming events.

Councilor Rossetti asked how much has been expended to-date for line 577000. She also asked why this line is so underspent. Mr. Louis-Jacques stated that some veterans passed away and no longer receive benefits from the program. He has conducted some outreach partnering with the city of Revere to put on COVID 19 vaccine clinic. These were all people who had never connected with the Veterans before through Face Book and Twitter.

Chair Scott asked if Chapter 115 is based on income. Mr. Louis-Jacques stated that if the veteran participated in the program and moved to a more stable housing and job, they eventually graduate and move on. Due to the pandemic, so many were experiencing other issues.

- Health and Human Services

Mr. Kress stated the state supported the eviction moratorium for another 90 days.

He stated the Personal Services budget is down 50% which is primarily due to transfer of the school nurse program to the school department. Additionally, the manager of diversity, equity and inclusion position was transferred to the newly-created racial and social justice department and retitled to ADA coordinator.

The Ordinary Maintenance budget is down 13% due to reductions in Professional and

Technical services as well as medical/dental supplies, both related to the transfer of the school nurse program.

Councilor Rossetti asked a question on PS 2 lines for public health vacancy end of February and preparedness nurse vacant since April when staff retired. Mr. Kress stated the public health vacancy advertisement was posted this past week and he anticipates the nurse manager position will be hired in July. These positions are union and someone is temporarily filling the position. He also has a per diem nurse who is interested in the preparedness nurse position. Councilor Rossetti asked about the social worker position and when it was approved last year. This will be the second social worker for HHS. They have had two rounds of interviews and Mr. Kress is trying to find someone with language capacity.

Councilor Rossetti motioned That the Administration reconsider their proposed Budget by incorporating 10% of ARPA funds towards FY22 Budget, given rise in Water and Sewer rates, Real Estate Tax, and the High School debt exclusion coupled with proposed FY22 Budget with a 9% increase. Lay on table.

Mr. Bean stated there are a number of positions and needs for the city that are not in the budget.

Councilor Ballantyne asked Mr. Bean about the dashboard calculator for increases for the high school, CPA and water and sewer. Mr. Bean stated he will inform the city on cut night the total proposed for the property owners. Councilor Ballantyne requested another column be added for total impact to be called the range for the highs and lows. Councilor White asked Mr. Bean what would be the impact be if \$3M reduction in the levy. Mr. Bean will confer with Mr. Golden on Monday morning.

Unfinished Business

(ID # 24992): That the administration strike the language “related to ongoing/exiting litigation” from the 3rd paragraph of the Ordinary Maintenance Changes narrative on the City Council page in the FY-22 Budget book.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24993): That the mayor allocate appropriate funds for hardware to administrate hybrid meetings and also provide funding for the City Council or Clerks of Committees budget for support staff.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24994): That the mayor set aside an additional \$300,000 in a segregated fund to be available for Racial and Social Justice appropriations mid-year.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24995): That the mayor appropriate \$80,000 for a community engagement specialist for the City Council and for committee meetings.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24996): That the mayor create 2 fully funded new positions (one Review Planner and one Violation Inspector for existing infrastructure) within ISD, requiring hires to have demonstrable experience and knowledge on ADA compliance matters.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24997): That the administration provide for the creation of a position starting July 1, 2021 for a clerk to assist with the planned superannuation of an employee and ensure a fully staffed department, in the amount of \$90,000 for FY22.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24998): That the administration provide for the creation of a position starting October 1, 2021 for an administrative clerk to assist with ARPA and fund tracking documentation, in the amount of \$50,000 for FY22.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24999): That the administration devote roughly \$100,000 in personal services to support the position requests of an additional projector manager and the fractional support from the general fund budget for administrative support for IAM.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 25000): That the administration devote \$1.5 million as requested for the building reconstruction (line 582002) and improvement (line 582003) in Capital Projects.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 25001): Councilor Scott moved that the administration devote \$500,000 for street repairs (line 588002) in Engineering.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 25002): That the administration add \$100,000 to Engineering Personal Services to fund an engineering position for implementation of short-term ADA compliant designs for street and building improvements working in collaboration with DPW.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 25017): That the Police Department Overtime line (513000) be reduced by \$500,000.

RESULT:

LAI D ON THE TABLE