



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 2, 2022
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jake Wilson	Chair	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Vice Chair	Present	
Beatriz GomezMouakad	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Judy PinedaNeufeld	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
Charlotte Kelly	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Absent	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Remote	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six City Councilor	Remote	
Willie BurnleyJr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Mary Skipper, Chad Massa, Liz Doncaster, Sarah Davila, Susanna Hernandez Morgan, Christine Trevisone, Francis Gorski, Heather McCormick, Jessica Boston Davis, Andre Green, Kimberly Wells-City Clerk, Michael Mastrobuoni-Finance, Ed Bean-Finance, Linda Dubuque-Treasurer, Frank Golden-Assessor and Aneesh Sahni-Mayor's Office

The meeting was held in-person and virtually. The meeting was called to order at 7:46 p.m. by Chairperson Wilson and adjourned at 11:30 p.m.

Approval of the May 24, 2022 Minutes

No action was taken on the minutes.

Review of the FY 2023 Budget School Department

School Superintendent, School Department and School Committee members spoke on accomplishments, highlight of welcoming students and staff back to the school. Mary Skipper, school superintendent, talked about the dropout rates which are below the state level. Francis Gorski spoke on budget guidelines and budget development process. Jessica Boston Davis continue to expand on support teaching and learning through Equity and Access. Susana Hernandez Morgan stated that 30% students have had interruption in their education. Sarah Davila discussed the hiring of more bilingual counselors. Liz Doncaster asked for two new mediation counselors and six more social-emotional

counselors. Heather McCormick stated 1500 students for afterschool programs and over 1350 for summer/vacation week programs. They talked about expanding the summer programming from 235 to 275 students. They will also serve a projected 1750 students throughout the 2022-23 school year. Grants are higher than historical levels. On the Non-payroll side an increase of \$438,575. Salaries, general fund level increase of \$7,988,125. FY23 Salaries ESSER Funding increase of 33.25 FTE's. Expand school based social workers who will have the ability to reach out to outside agencies, part of school-based support team, work with families and visit homes.

Councilor Burnley asked about more money being put into afterschool programming. What programming is available before school. Ms. Skipper stated that they could not get staff to come in early, but they are looking at other opportunities to fill some of the early before school time. They are also looking at hours for the summer for students.

Councilor Burnley also asked about the drop out rate right before the pandemic in 2019.

Ms. Skipper responded they did home visits to engage with students to identify who needed help. They carved out a solution with the students working with the adult education program. When the pandemic hit, many students became disconnected. Councilor Burnley also asked about \$50k reduction in supplies. Mr. Gorski stated they have been able to do a lot of purchasing of supplies and other materials, they put a lot of investment into the CT program. Councilor Burnley asked about additional funding for MBTA passes for \$150k. Mr. Gorski stated city councilor and the school committee for high school with additional funding to expand MBTA for 7th and 8th graders during 2023.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked about dropout and graduation rates. She also asked about a language equity coach and gender equity. She asked about the language program that has not expanded beyond learning English. Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked how the afterschool programming is being made more accessible to lower income. Heather McCormick talked about expanding the ratio between teacher vs. students. There have been a number of scholarships. There was also very intentional program for lower income. Ms. Davis talked about coaching responsibilities helping teachers with data and listening trends, setting goals with principals.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about salary changes increase in staffing. Asked if there has been comprehension review of the positions and if the increase considers inflations. She asked for the exact COLA increase going into budget. Mr. Green stated they are currently doing a comprehension study with the non-union staff. Ms. Skipper stated they are still in negotiations, but generally it is a 3% increase. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about the impact with one of the city's partners closing for mental health group for youth and teens. Ms. Skipper stated they are always looking at partners that are close to the city and have added two partners later in the year. Ms. Doncaster stated they try to find partners that closer to the city to accommodate the students. They will continue to look for partners who speak multiple languages. They are not expecting any gaps for services and there are not waitlist. Councilor Pineda Neufeld spoke about the rise in bullying and how to focus increase in personnel. Ms. Doncaster talked about full time drug and alcohol counselors. They do consistent training on suicide and they get constant feedback about the trends out there with students. Ms. Skipper stated they need to look more comprehensively how things are running with the students after school through the evenings.

Councilor Strezo asked about school time with kids needing something to do and the high school being open for extended hours. Will staff members be able to help students process

with mental health issues and if this has been established in the 2023 budget. Ms. Skipper will be leveraging program partners to find something for students to do in the high school. Councilor Kelly asked what are the most important areas that the city councilors should pay attention that would not be in the school department budget. Ms. Skipper talked about homeless students and the capacity for social workers to work directly with the families. The housing department has been great partnering with the school department. The part that is missing is youth services. The youth need something else to go to once they leave schools, like mental health support, workforce development and on-route internship programs which is through OSPCD.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked on a list of new proposed staff for a labor counselor for \$110k a year. Mr. Green stated there are 1100 employees and labor counselor had been outsourced for year. This position will allow the school department to gain more capacity to handle complaints, training and compliance.

Chair Jake Wilson asked if there are any plans to invest in new communication software or technology. It was stated the school department is looking into additional software and have not submitted into the budget at this time. They need software/technology that will work with their very diverse student population.

City Council

Clerk Wells presented a 16% decrease. The stipend for the city clerk has been rolled in the salary. Councilor Burnley asked about in-state conference and flat rate. Ms. Wells stated that in-state conferences were added to encourage councilors to attend Mass Municipal Association conferences. He also asked if it's \$1,000 for all councilors. Councilor Burnley asked about the salary bumping and about the comprehension study. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated the salary study is in scope development with procurement. Councilor Burnley asked if there is a requirement on how much the salary should be and used Cambridge and other community salary for reference. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated he believed best practice is for all salary to go through the salary advisory board.

Councilor Kelly asked about the legal service expense. Will the councilor be able to use the funds in the ordinary maintenance line? Ms. Wells stated she could not find someone to take on this service. Councilor Kelly asked if it would be possible to use the funds in O&M to keep a lawyer here. Councilor Scott asked about the municipal comprehension advisory board regarding a 2016 salary study. He also asked about every non-union be recommended for a flat rate increase. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated the merit system was put on hold in FY2021 due to jobs changing and the objectives changed. He talked about a one and two-step process of 2-4%. Councilor Scott talked about increases not extended to the city councilors. Clerks had not received raises until last year. The raises should have been applied to the city councilors, just as much as the non-union staff.

Councilor Scott motioned that the salary ranges for councilors and president be amended to at least the same percent increases as non-union members occurred since 2016. The motion will be laid on the table and discussed at cut night.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad would like to have more diversity and inclusion. The city is growing and it is not fair for the staff to have evening meetings every night. She suggested a different perspective to be more inclusive, she also talked about the future of the city of Somerville.

Clerk of Committees

Ms. Wells stated there are very little changes. Councilor Scott stated last year's budget book is still online. The actual change for this dept and the clerks were overlooked for the past year and are still lagging behind. He stated that each position should be increased by \$2,000 a year. He asked did the clerks receive a pay increase for FY18-FY21. Ms. Wells stated not to her knowledge was there an increase.

Councilor Scott motion that the salary for the clerks in this department be increased to account for the years of missing raises. This motion was laid on the table and will taken up on cut night.

City Clerk

Ms. Wells there were some increases shifting commissions added legislative analysis position. Archivist was not included in previous budget. She also talked about how to manage the city's record and new technology. Increase in new operating software, new zoning software, and dog licensing software. Councilor Kelly asked about the archivist base salary and how it compares to other communities. Councilor Burnley asked about the badges, trophies and plaques. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about the postage and is controlled by the city clerk office. Councilor Clingan asked about audio visual technology and going forward with a hybrid model. Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked about the rental storage space and if the documents are scanned would the rental charge go away. Employee training courses for \$2,000 for the new staff including the city clerk who joined in July. Councilor Scott talked about hybrid setups for community meetings. Ms. Wells has already purchased two hybrid units which includes microphones and laptops. Councilor Scott asked about the degree for the archivist positions and Ms. Wells responded that it would be a Master's Degree required position.

Councilor Scott motioned that the number rating for the archivist and assistant archivist be revisited by the administration prior to submitting a revised budget. This was laid on the table for cut night.

Licensing Commission

Clerk Wells stated there are no changes to the budget, just the salaries for the three commissioners. Goals for the commissions are listed under the city clerk's office.

Revolving Funds

Mr. Mastrobuoni spoke on the revolving funds relating to farmers market, business activities, and parking violations. Operating questions should be asked at the individual departments manage the services. Councilor Clingan asked about the \$75,000 Section 22B of Mass GL. The funds are available to be used for individuals with disabilities.

Revenue Questions

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about renegotiated Tufts payments for FY22 and could there be a higher amount. She also asked if the city is expecting funds for recreational marijuana. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated the city is not expecting funds at this point. Councilor Pineda Neufeld also asked about ordinance violation and why are they separate. Councilor Burnley asked about ARPA and how the funds are dispersed. Aneesh Sahni stated The ARPA committee is being put together and the mayor is able to create the advisory

committee. Councilor Kelly asked about the ordinance violation and why the proposal went down this Fiscal Year. She also asked about the property taxes base and what it looks like. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated that the city is anticipating \$11.5M. Assessor Golden stated they have a life science explosion with eight currently being built with \$8M. He also stated that \$11.5M is a very conservative new growth number. Residential is still strong producing in the \$3M area. He is hoping Personal property is making greater returns. Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked about resident parking permits. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated not proposing to change any residential parking permit costs. There are more vehicles in the City of Somerville. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about vehicles over certain weight may be charged extra. Chair Wilson asked about revenues in budget book and asked how current are they which were updated last week. He would like to hear what the expectations in the final month plus before the end of FY. Mr. Bean is expecting a very strong Free Cash to come in around \$9.4M. Final meals and hotel/motel taxes are coming in soon. Ms. Dubuque stated they are short staffed in treasury department and trying to get the revenue as fast as possible so they are accurate. Tax collection rate for the City is 98%.

Reference Material:

- FY23 City Council Budget Presentation (with School Department)
- FY23 School Committee's Budget Summary (with School Department)
- GF FY23 STAFF CHANGES_06-02-22 (with School Department)
- ESSER FY23 STAFF CHANGES_06-2-22 (with School Department)