



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 6, 2024

6:00 PM

Committee of the Whole

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:06pm and adjourned at 8:36pm with a roll call vote of 9 in favor (Councilors Wilson, McLaughlin, Davis, Ewen-Campen, Scott, Mbah, Burnley Jr., Clingan, Strezo, Pineda-Neufeld), none opposed, and Councilor Sait absent.

Others present:

Karin Carroll - Director of Health and Human Services, Erica Satin-Hernandez - ARPA Director, Nick Antanavica - Director of Inspectional Services Department, Lammis Vargis - Chief Administrative Officer, Mike Mastrobuoni - Budget Director, Charles Breen - Fire Chief, Sean Tierney - Assistant Fire Chief, Charles Femino - Police Chief, Anthony Delmonaco - Police Director of Finance, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager

Roll Call

Present:	City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr., Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan, Lance L. Davis, Ben Ewen-Campen, Wilfred N. Mbah, Matthew McLaughlin, Judy Pineda Neufeld, Kristen Strezo and Kimberly Wells
Absent:	Ward Two City Councilor Naima Sait

1. Review of the FY 2025 Budget
 - Health and Human Services
 - Inspectional Services
 - Emergency Management
 - Fire
 - Fire Alarm
 - Police
 - Animal Control
 - E911
 - Miscellaneous Budgetary Items

Health and Human Services

Karin Carroll Director of Health and Human Services (HHS) spoke about the additional funding requested for a Community Health Worker and a Homelessness Contract Coordinator to allow the department to continue work on its key initiatives. The department requests an increase of 17.5% to the Personal Services line for additional staff, an increase to the Ordinary Maintenance of 2.2%, an increase to temporary wages line, office supplies, and training and travel memberships due to increase in staff and associated

programming.

Chair Wilson asked a clarification to a pre submitted question, “How does the volume of requests for Case Manager services compare to the demand for Community Health Workers services at this time?”, and if health workers are routinely getting called in to assist case manager workload and are there plans to address that problem in the future. Director Carroll spoke about how they all work as a team and the health workers can bring in lived experience to assist and the whole department has overlapping responsibilities to assist the most in need residents.

Councilor Pineda-Neufeld asked about how HHS will continue to serve, or the cost to expand programming under the Council on Aging (COA) to residents who do not fall under the \$80,000 budget request in the Professional and Technical Services line from the COA to continue the Taxi to Health programming. Food Access and Healthy Communities does not have a budget book to outline money to spend on residents under 60 who qualify as low income to continue the Taxi to Health service once ARPA fundings run out in the fall. Director Carroll said the COA does have a larger capacity to serve their target community members and they can speak to what that looks like in their presentation later on. Director Carroll went on to say there is less capacity in HHS to continue to service under 60 community members and HHS is doing work to connect the constituents to other services that are available to them. Councilor Pineda-Neufeld also asked if there are other organizations providing vouchers like this program. Director Carroll said she would get back to the Councilor with what specific programming exists with similar taxi voucher programming. ARPA Director Erica Satin-Hernandez added that this is an ARPA funded program and the direct benefit to the under 60 residents makes it difficult to fund where COA has more flexibility within their specific targeted population. Councilor Burnley continues to ask on the Professional and Technical Services line what the gap in budgeted and actuals means in terms of what programs and services were not able to be executed in fiscal year 2024 (FY 24). Director Carroll explained some reserve funds for programming did not need to be used, line for technical assistance that they did not end up needing as the Overdose prevention center has not yet been launched, community needs assessment lines that is in the process and will be partially billed out for next year, and communications was decreased for FY 25 in response to underutilized funds during FY 24. Councilor Burnley asked another question specifically to the On Point contract for \$10,000 that has been in the budget since FY24 and what roadblocks exist to complete that. Director Carroll

expressed for HHS and the Mayor's Office it is a continued goal, and they continue to look for ways those funds may be utilized for other harm reduction services.

Councilor McLaughlin asked about what new initiatives, positions, and grant funding related to homelessness in the city will be in the budget this year. In response Director Carroll reiterated the addition of Homeless Contact Coordinator and Community Health Worker Manager who will both work closely with the city's unhoused community. As stated in pre-submitted questions funding towards homelessness is coming from the Emergency Stabilization Funds in 10 shelter beds at \$400,000, Warning Center Contract at \$266,000, Engagement Center, Shower Van etc. at \$300,000 and funding from ARPA for Health Care for the Homeless Clinic at \$150,000. Councilor McLaughlin asked a follow-up of who was doing the coordination of resources now and if the position was not funded who would manage these resources. Director Carroll responded that the city has a grants position and a department who can assist identifying grants in addition to the HSS administrative team.

Councilor Scott asked if there is money in the budget for securing naloxone dispensing boxes in public restrooms. Director Carroll said there is staff who is doing naloxone training and harm reduction work in the community and funds in operating for backpacks and other harm reduction materials to supply to the community.

Inspectional Services

Nick Antanavica Director of the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) presented and shared ISD is now fully staffed, and they are looking forward to the additional programming that is now possible and the ability to team with various departments. On the budget, an increase to the rodent budget to fully utilize their extermination budget, an increase to the Personal Services line of 6.4% and an increase to the Ordinary Maintenance by 11.8% to account for increased training for staff.

Councilor Wilson asked about rodent control and the funding allocated to education and enforcement. Director Antanavica responded with multiple funding sources are available to continue the education on pest control and expand programming. Councilor Scott asked if there is funding in the budget to implement the vacant properties ordinance. In reply, Director Antanavica stated that revisions are needed, and he is hoping to come back to the Council for review after recess.

Emergency Management

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) Lammis Vargis and Budget Director Mike Mastrobuoni presented the goals of the emergency management department and goals for the next director. The position has been vacant for the last year and a conditional offer has been given with an anticipated start date in July.

Councilor Scott asking for Appendix B personal listing from Director Mastrobuoni who responded and stated it is live for the departments that are discussing tonight, and they are working with Human Resources (HR) to validate the vacancies for the rest of the city. Question to CAO Vargis from Councilor Scott confirmed no dollars were spent on the Deputy Director position that was created in FY24. CAO Vargis said the position was not filled in FY 24 and the position will now be filled come July.

Fire

Chief Charles Breen introduced Assistant Chief Sean Tierney, Finance Director James Mucci, Analyst Jonathon Mancina, Administrative Assistant Ali Belabdi, and Senior Clerk Doreen Erquiza. Chief Breen presented the FY 25 budget increase in the Personal Services line for additional firefighters for the Assembly Station and step increases for nonunion and Somerville Municipal Employees Association (SMEA) staff. An update is needed to the Personal Services line, and it will be expected to decrease as there is discrepancy in a stipend. Ordinary Maintenance is set to increase due to gear purchase for new members and repair parts and equipment.

Councilor Burnley asked about supplies for men and women being up by \$142,000 and what that line is for. Chief Breen explained it is the cost of two sets of gear per firefighter, 24 sets will be needed, and will be a onetime purchase and does not anticipate such high costs going forward in other budgets. Councilor Burnley also asked about the \$2,000 on the Peer Support Line and what that funding is allocated for. Assistant Chief Sean Tierney explained it is reserved for members who take specialized training courses and can assist during tragic events in the community. Councilor Scott went on to ask about apparatus costs coming out of capital assets and how many are coming in. Chief Breen responded the funding comes out of capital assets and there is one pump coming in and anticipates more in the coming years. Councilor Scott commented on the department going over their overtime budget from last year and if Chief Breen had asked for additional staffing, in response Chief Breen explained he is waiting on the opening of the Assembly station and will reassess needs shortly after.

Fire Alarm

Chief Charles Breen presented the budget increase in Personal Services due to a step increase in collective bargaining benefits, Ordinary Maintenance adds \$2,000 for additional training for staff to be able to pay for books, tuition, and fees. A staffing update was also provided, and the department is now fully staffed.

Police

Councilor McLaughlin recused himself due to conflict of interest by having a family member apart of the Police unit.

Chief Charles Femino introduced staff members Anothy Delmonaco as Director of Finance and James Stanford as the Deputy Chief. Chief Femino opened highlighting the total budget request equaling \$18,125,80 as an increase of 2.1% from FY 24. Personal Services is up \$279,625 due to the hire of a full-time position and anticipated salary adjustments. Ordinary maintenance is up \$45,260 due to inflation and vendor costs, and Special Items is up \$30,456 due to rent increases in both substations. At the conclusion of the budget presentation Chief Femino took a few moments to highlight some recommendations that came from the completed Staffing and Operation Study.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked now that the staffing study is complete where the administration is in the process of establishing the view of what proactive policing is, who is leading that discussion, and how many officers does the new staffing model anticipate needing. Chief Femino expressed waiting on the Mayor's Staff for further discussion. On the point of a new staffing model Councilor Scott asked for clarification on the budget accounting for 88 patrol officers, Chief Femino confirmed that number is accurate. Councilor Mbah asked how much of the budget is allocated to traditional police enforcement (community policing). Chief said community policing no longer exists, talking about how much in the budget is allocated to community engagement there is now a unit, Community Affairs, and that is two officers so the pay of the two officers would be the funds for the community engagement.

Animal Control

Police Chief Charles Femino spoke to increases in the budget to Personal Services, Ordinary Maintenance, and Professional and Technical Services line.

Councilor Burnley asked the Chief to speak on the Professional and Technical Services line and what the line was used for in FY24. Finance Director Delmonaco answered the increase is relative to veterinary services and the increase in more animals that are being treated.

E911

Chief Femino presented an increase to the Personal Services line to allow for a one step increase in union positions and two step increase in nonunion positions.

Councilor Burnley asked a question directed at the salaries line and the actuals versus budgeted with overtime employees. Finance Director

Delmonaco spoke to this and there is not a way to budget for overtime with grants. Councilor Burnley asked a follow up question if there are budgetary implications to call diversions in the department, response by Chief Femino expressed additional training would be required to learn how to triage those calls. Councilor Scott asked for a report on all grant money coming in, Chief Femino said they can work to get a report together for the Councilor.

Miscellaneous Budgetary Items