



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, May 30, 2024

7:00 PM

NOTICE: This is NOT the official version of the City Council's minutes. While reasonable efforts have been made to assure the accuracy of the data provided, do not rely on this information without first checking with the City Clerk.

1. OPENING CEREMONIES

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM by Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen.

- 1.1. Roll Call Call of the Roll.
(ID # [24-0850](#))

RESULT: **PLACED ON FILE**

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

2. CITATIONS

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

4. ORDERS, ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

6. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

7. COMMUNICATIONS OF THE MAYOR

- 7.1. Mayor's Request Requesting the appropriation of \$342,878,129 to fund the FY 2025 General
(ID # [24-0814](#)) Fund Operating Budget.

Mayor Ballantyne presented the proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 budget and touched upon several key areas, telling the Council that this budget allows

for sustained growth and progress in Somerville despite a changing and uncertain economic environment. She went on to say that the city is still delivering notable growth, however, FY 2025 revenue projections are lower due to a range of external factors. The proposed FY 2025 General Operating Fund Budget is \$360 million, an increase of \$19.7 million over FY 2024. The FY 2023 and FY 2024 budgets added new resources and those investments were targeted to accelerate growth and expand impacts. The FY 2025 budget carries forward those investments to strengthen two key priorities: schools and workforce equity and retainment.

Schools remain the largest component of the city budget, at 30% of all budgeted expenditures and the School Department will see an additional \$7 million in its FY 2025 budget. The Schools will see a net new significant increase of 36.6 full-time positions, strategically targeted to meet educational and whole-child needs to provide the comprehensive core learning, enrichment, out-of-school time activities, and family, health, and mental health supports that will best help them thrive, develop, learn, and prepare for success. The FY 2023, FY 2024, and proposed FY 2025 School Department budgets combined, represent a 27% increase, equal to \$22 million, over its FY 2022 budget, essentially meaning that there is less money available for new investments in the city budget.

A focus is being made to pay city employees fairly and equitably and to attract and keep quality workers with competitive wages. Mayor Ballantyne stated that she wants union workers to have fair, competitive wages, and good working conditions.

For the third year in a row, the Administration has invited the City Council to share its priorities in the form of budget resolutions. Additionally, community input through multiple methods and processes also guided this budget. Mayor Ballantyne noted some investments with the budget to deliver core services and advance progress and proposed funding the following staffing and program investments within the budget:

- Proposed Positions:
 - A Homelessness Coordinator (new)
 - A conversion of a half-time Deputy Director for the Office of Housing Stability to full-time (this is a net new .5 position)
 - A Wage Theft Coordinator (created in FY24, funded in FY25)
 - A DPW Facilities Coordinator (new)
 - A Construction Liaison & Design Manager (new)
 - A Civilian Crossing Guard Supervisor (new)
 - A Community Health Worker Manager (this will make permanent a currently grant-funded position)
 - A part-time IT Specialist (new)
- Proposed Programming and Services:
 - A transition away from rodenticide in City and School buildings
 - A contract to maintain our green stormwater infrastructure
 - A transition of ARPA funded programs onto the general fund

City budget

- Funding for Human Resources FMLA services management
- Customer-centric training for public-facing staff
- Curbside composting

In addition, this budget proposes one new position and new program resources and repairs that are funded outside the budget via dedicated funds, grants, or resources, as follows:

- A Public Safety for All Initiative Program Manager
- A curbside composting pilot to advance climate action goals for energy efficient waste management
- Roof repairs and Central Library carpet replacement
- Additional funding for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)

The Mayor concluded the presentation by saying that the city, in order to prepare for changing economic winds and to close a \$3.2 million dollar budget gap created by lower revenue projections, made careful, tactical use of reserves.

Budget Director Michael Mastrobuoni spoke about the rising cost of health care and said that this year the increases are the highest in a decade and dramatically increases city cost by 9%. Mayor Ballantyne said that, on average, the increase is 8.8% and it is not being passed on to employees.

Councilor Burnley asked about the composting pilot and the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment, Christine Blais, replied that it's in development and expected to launch in 2025, in targeted for areas where rodent problems are the most serious, and will encompass about 700 houses. Councilor Davis recalled that \$96,000 was budgeted for a pilot program in 2016 that never came to fruition because it was not going to save city money. He then asked if saving money is a requirement for success and Director Blais replied that the city is looking for a return on investment over time that can help educate people about the environment, noting that it will be expensive, hence the small-scale pilot.

Councilor Mbah inquired about any American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) programs that might be closed down and the Mayor replied that some programs have been extended because the federal government extended its timeline. She also stated that none of the programs have been organically stopped. Councilor Mbah asked about early education programs and Mayor Ballantyne said that the Superintendent of Schools would address that during his presentation.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked what the Mayor has learned that led to this budget and Mayor Ballantyne responded by saying that the big picture was guided by the city's SomerVision goals and that over the last two budgets, the city has invested in departments to deliver services. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about the guaranteed basic income pilot program, and the Mayor said that the Office of Housing Stability has identified the individuals in most need. The program will provide \$750/month and noted that half of the recipients have children in the Somerville Public School system. Councilor Pineda Neufeld also asked how a number of studies informed this budget and Mayor Ballantyne said that she would ask the relevant

departments to address that question.

Councilor Scott commented that his review of past budgets from FY 2018 shows about a 54% increase overall. Mayor Ballantyne explained that she tried not to under invest the last two years and that the goals were to make sure that schools got priority along with city staff. Prior investments were made for a reason, to build from them without taking away from what the city supported. Councilor Scott stated that the budget for schools increased 55% and that the Library Department is receiving about \$250,000 less than expected. He asked the Mayor how she intends to rectify the past under-investments. Mayor Ballantyne replied that last year's budget was used as a baseline. Director Mastrobuoni explained that some of the departments mentioned will be evened out somewhat when union contracts are negotiated.

Councilor Wilson noted that schools, Fire and the Department of Public Works (DPW) saw large increases in the proposed budget and he asked why the DPW got an increase. Director Mastrobuoni replied that it was for maintenance of assets, contract costs, some impactful vendor contracts that increased due to inflation and some new positions.

Councilor Wilson gave a brief overview of the budget hearing process.

RESULT: **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

- 7.2. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0816](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$31,947,141 to fund the FY 2025 Sewer Enterprise Fund budget.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

- 7.3. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0817](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$21,398,392 to fund the FY 2025 Water Enterprise Fund budget.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

- 7.4. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0818](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$736,255 to fund the FY 2025 Kennedy School Pool Enterprise Fund budget.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

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- 7.5. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0819](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$237,000 to fund the FY 2025 Dilboy Fields Enterprise Fund budget.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.6. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0820](#)) Requesting the appropriation or reserve of \$3,436,205 in estimated FY 2025 Community Preservation Act (CPA) revenue for CPA projects and expenses.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.7. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0821](#)) Requesting approval of the expenditure limitations for departmental Revolving Funds for FY 2025.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.8. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0822](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$2,584,976 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Rainy Day Stabilization Fund.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.9. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0831](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$2,089,659 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Street Reconstruction and Renovation Stabilization Fund to support the 5-Year Capital Investment Plan.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.10. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0826](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,600,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Sewer Stabilization Fund to support the Water-Sewer Capital Investment Plan.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
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RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

- 7.11. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0825](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,200,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

- 7.12. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0823](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,000,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Salary & Wage Stabilization Fund.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

- 7.13. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0845](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,000,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Participatory Budgeting Stabilization Fund for the Participatory Budgeting Program.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

- 7.14. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0828](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$943,392 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Parks Stabilization Fund to support the 5-Year Capital Investment Plan.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

- 7.15. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0849](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$850,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Open Space Acquisition Stabilization Fund to acquire new publicly accessible open space.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

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- 7.16. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0843](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$700,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Capital Projects Stabilization Fund for a Fire Alarm Alerting System.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.17. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0824](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$500,00 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Compensated Absence Liability Fund.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.18. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0830](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$403,187 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Energy Stabilization Fund for projects that reduce carbon emissions and energy costs.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.19. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0827](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$400,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Water Stabilization Fund to support the Water-Sewer Capital Investment Plan.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.20. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0847](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$266,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Emergency Stabilization Fund to provide funding for the Warming Center.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 7.21. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0840](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,432,778 from the Water Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings Account to the FY 2025 Water Enterprise Fund budget.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through
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7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

7.22. Withdrawn
 (ID # [24-0844](#))

Withdrawn.

RESULT: WITHDRAWN

7.23. Mayor's Request
 (ID # [24-0842](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$149,051 from the Racial & Social Justice Fund to hire a Project Manager for the development of an Alternative Emergency Response Program.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

8. COMMUNICATIONS OF CITY OFFICERS

9. NEW BUSINESS

10. SUPPLEMENTAL ITEMS

10.1. Mayor's Request
 (ID # [24-0832](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$7,635,022 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Facility Renovation and Reconstruction Stabilization Fund to support the 5-Year Capital Investment Plan.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

10.2. Mayor's Request
 (ID # [24-0829](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$2,589,087 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Capital Projects Stabilization Fund to support the 5-Year Capital Investment Plan.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

10.3. Mayor's Request
 (ID # [24-0835](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$2,000,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to support flexible rental assistance programs.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through

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- 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 10.4. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0833](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$500,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Traffic Safety Stabilization Fund for traffic safety improvements.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 10.5. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0837](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$500,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the COVID-19 Stabilization Fund to fund the Somerville Public School Parent/Guardian Transit Pass Program.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 10.6. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0841](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$500,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Capital Projects Stabilization Fund to supplement a prior appropriation to purchase and install prefabricated standalone public toilets.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 10.7. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0846](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$350,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Community Composting Stabilization Fund for a pilot community composting program.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
RESULT: **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee
- 10.8. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0836](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$270,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Immigrant Legal Services Stabilization Fund for immigration legal services.
- President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.
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RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

10.9. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-0834](#))

Requesting approval of a transfer of \$2,110,472 from the Salary Contingency Account-Salaries to the Salary & Wage Stabilization Fund.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

10.10. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-0839](#))

Requesting approval to create the Community Composting Program Stabilization Fund.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

10.11. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-0851](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$725,000 from the Capital Projects Stabilization Fund to fund the Fire Alarm Alerting System.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

10.12. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-0838](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$500,000 from the COVID-19 Stabilization Fund for funding for the SPS Parent/Guardian Transit Pass Program.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

10.13. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-0848](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$270,000 from the Immigrant Legal Services Stabilization Fund for legal services to immigrants.

President Ewen-Campen moved to waive the readings of items 7.2 through 7.21, 7.23 and 10.1 through 10.13 and refer them to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was Adjourned at 8:00 PM on a roll call vote of 11 in favor (McLaughlin, Davis, Wilson, Sait, Scott, Mbah, Burnley, Clingan, Strezo, Pineda Neufeld, Ewen-Campen), 0 opposed.

