



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 14, 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	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Absent	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six City Councilor	Present	
Kristen Strezo	City Councilor at Large	Present	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Scott at 6:03pm and adjourned at 10:40pm.

Councilor McLaughlin was absent as he is recused from matters pertaining to the Police Department.

Others present: Lauren Racaniello - Mayor's Office; Hannah Carrillo - Mayor's Office; Chief Charles Femino - Police; Deputy James Stanford - Police; Deputy Chris Ward - Police; Patricia Contente - Police COHR; Meredith Willis - Police; Denise Molina Capers - RSJ; Ed Bean - Finance; Mike Mastrobuoni - Budget

The Committee entered into recess at 6:13pm and reconvened at 6:20pm.

The Committee entered into recess at 8:51pm and reconvened at 9:00pm.

Review of the FY-22 Budget

Chair Scott reminded everyone that the budget information can be found at somervillema.gov/fy22budget.

Police

Chief Femino shared a presentation on the Police Department's budget, noting that he welcomes the discussion about the role of police in society. He thanked the Council for their support in his role as Interim Chief over the last six months, and thanked all of the officers who

have committed themselves to the Department and the City. He elaborated that the Somerville Police Department has not turned a deaf ear to its community, and adopted a community policing approach many years ago. He expressed confidence that the future will include increased transparency and community engagement at all levels.

Chief Femino shared some details from last year's budget, the departmental organizational structure, staffing, responsibilities and workload, reforms to date, and the Racial & Social Justice (RSJ) Director's new role. In FY21, \$1.29M of the department's budget was reallocated towards racial and social justice. The proposed FY22 budget represents an increase of 8% over FY21, driven by cost of living increases in the patrol officers' contract from a collective bargaining agreement. He also proposed the addition of a Finance position for Public Safety, with 75% of the funding coming from the Police Department and the remaining 25% from the Fire Department. Chief Femino added that Somerville spends 6.6% of its total operating budget on the Police Department, which is lower than surrounding communities.

Chief Femino highlighted the Community Outreach, Help and Recovery (COHR) Unit, which provides jail diversion, crisis intervention training, and community education networks. Ms. Contente, the Director, added that most of the positions are funded through grants. Ms. Contente elaborated that the department also collects data on incidents involving narcotics and mental health, and her division reviews the associated reports and conducts follow up. The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training is also the only one of its kind that explicitly addresses race. Approximately 58% of the SPD and 44 other agency partners have completed the training. Chief Femino added that he identified 13 vacancies. A continued decrease in staffing will make it difficult for the department to respond to calls in a timely manner. He specifically highlighted domestic disturbance calls, which average 10 per week and require at least two officers. Other concerns include the ability to respond to opiate overdoses and shots fired. He added that the police reform bill has increased the requirements for compliance such as analysis, reporting, and communication, and there have been increased numbers of forced holdovers. The Chief emphasized that the Department remains committed to working with the City and the Racial & Social Justice Director to move forward into the reimagining policing era. The steps include increased transparency, expansion of training, expansion of the restorative justice program, commitment to comply with the police reform bill, commitment to implement body worn cameras, commitment to pursue further reforms, and contracting a consultant to conduct a staffing analysis.

The Chief emphasized the need for staffing and urged the City Council not to cut funds from the budget, as this would impact the safety of residents, and to fund a consultant to conduct a staffing analysis.

Councilor Ewen-Campen shared that Police are relied upon for many issues that are not crime related, but currently there are not other options for resources. He added that there is still much work to be done, and he is reluctant to make decisions that will affect the discussion of reimagining the department. He asked about the costs for body-worn cameras, and the Chief confirmed that the costs for that are not included in the budget. Councilor Ewen-Campen also asked about the staffing for traffic details, and the impact on other staffing concerns such as holdovers. Chief Femino shared that holdovers are unplanned, which impacts things such as childcare and family life. He explained that the schedules are pre-planned, and details must be signed up for on days off or times outside of their schedule shifts. The Chief clarified that he

does not believe that details interfere with officer readiness. Chair Scott asked for clarification that the overtime eligibility list is separate from the detail eligibility list and the Chief confirmed that they are separate. Councilor Strezo asked whether the COHR trainings would be mandatory, in order to increase the completion rate in the department. Chief Femino noted that the program is well respected in the department and it will be up to the officers if they are interested and available to attend, though he would not be opposed to making it compulsory for new hires. Councilor Mbah asked if any new anti-racist training had been implemented and Chief Femino shared that all officers attended implicit bias training, as well as specialized training for the police reform bill. Many other officers have attended other trainings, which have been taken seriously and are ongoing. Councilor Mbah also asked about the school to prison pipeline and requested data on the impact of officers in the schools and what has been done to reduce the school to prison pipeline. Chief Femino replied that the School Resource Officer in the High School is in a non-enforcement role, and provides mentorship. The department has also reexamined the memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Schools on when police would be called, noting that it is a last resort to take a student into custody. Ms. Molina Capers added that the Police Department began the process of reimagining policing before the Department of Racial and Social Justice was created, and building trust in the community and emphasizing the safety of officers are paramount in the process. Councilor Ballantyne asked about the reimagining process and how changes would be implemented. Ms. Molina Capers elaborated that it is difficult to articulate specific steps, but a priority is to give voice to those most impacted, including communities of color and low income communities with limited resources. Councilor Ballantyne also asked for more information about the correlation between staffing and specific service types, particularly since crime is decreasing. Chief Femino elaborated that there are serious incidents occurring on the midnight shift, in particular, such as robbery, house break-ins, and assaults. Staffing is intended to accommodate the fluctuations.

Councilor Niedergang asked about vacant positions and Chief Femino responded that there are 12 patrol officer vacancies and 1 Sergeant (the gang officer), including 4 neighborhood police officers, 3 in criminal investigation, 1 in family services, and 1 traffic officer. Councilor Rossetti asked for clarification that the 12 vacancies include the positions that were cut last year, and the 6 positions that were vacant have been filled. Mr. Mastrobuoni elaborated that of the 13 vacancies, 4 are officers that have been approved by the Confirmation of Appointments Committee and are enrolled in the academy. The department is proposing 3 additional positions, in addition to the 6 that were funded for one month last year. Chief Femino clarified that the total positions he is requesting is 94. Councilor Niedergang suggested that the Chief also prepare an estimation of upcoming retirements. He also noted that a staffing study under the current conditions makes little sense, when it will need to be done once the process of reimagining is complete, with new departments taking on some of the work. Chief Femino noted that it will be several years before a new system is in place and suggested a study would give a baseline of what is needed. Mr. Mastrobuoni added that the scope of work being developed for the study includes alternative response models, and could serve as a starting point for gathering the data to inform the reimagining process. Councilor Clingan suggested that an exploration of best practices would be useful, but understanding who will be conducting the study is also important. Chair Scott asked how many officers are in the patrol division and

the Chief noted that there are 52 positions assigned but occasionally officers out with long-term illness. Councilor Niedergang emphasized that institutions don't reform themselves, and he remains unconvinced that the study is needed, but if it is conducted, it should fall under the purview of the Office of Racial and Social Justice or perhaps SomerStat. Councilor Clingan asked for confirmation that the work around reimagining policing would continue regardless of the study, and Ms. Molina Capers responded that the study would be only one piece; the data would help but would not hold up any other pieces of the process. Councilor Niedergang countered that we have the data, with two full-time crime analysts and many community members conducting analyses.

Councilor Niedergang also shared concerns about gang activity at the Mystic Housing Development and asked about the coordinated response with other City departments to deal with the threats to public safety. The Chief noted that he will forward a written response about reforms implemented, which include new patrols in the surrounding areas. He elaborated that the response is multi-jurisdictional and other resources are involved in both the deployment of personnel and ongoing dialogue. Councilor White asked about a map with coding from A through C+ and if the department engages in separating the City into high or low crime areas and how that impacts staffing. Chief Femino noted that he was not familiar with the map, but the crime analysis unit researches crime patterns and trends and there may be redeployments of personnel as a response, but staffing on a permanent basis does not generally change. Councilor White also asked about the impact that reimagining the Police Department would have on collective bargaining, and Chief Femino noted that there are some issues that will need to be discussed between the City and Collective Bargaining Units, but he cannot speculate on the outcomes. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about the commitment of civil asset forfeiture funds to mental health and anti-bias initiatives and the Chief confirmed that to his knowledge, the funds have been committed to the COHR program. Councilor Ewen-Campen requested documentation of this fund allocation.

Mr. Mastrobuoni shared background on the difference between base salary and total compensation, noting that the base salary amount is the weekly or monthly wage, while the total includes wage differential, holiday pay, and other items.

Councilor Mbah moved to reduce the Overtime line (513000) by \$500,000. The motion was laid on the table.

Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that the effect of this may not be to reallocate those specific funds, but rather the department could cut from other places and also request supplemental funding be allocated. Ms. Racaniello suggested that the labor counsel would be the best person to respond to this question. Chair Scott pointed out that the budget overtime in FY19 and FY20 was \$1.3M. He also asked for clarification on the transfer into the budget, and Mr. Mastrobuoni noted it was to cover the settlement with the union, and the Other Lump Sum line is for the years prior to FY21. Chief Femino elaborated that the primary drivers of the increased personnel costs are the negotiated cost of living increase in salaries, and the correlated increase in overtime. Mr. Mastrobuoni clarified that this has effectively maintained the same number of hours of overtime but accommodated the new rates.

Chair Scott asked about the staffing plan for 94 officers, noting that the personnel list does not reflect any superior officer vacancies, while the vacancy report indicates one Sergeant and one Lieutenant vacancy. Chief Femino noted that the roles are filled in an Acting capacity. Chair

Scott asked if there had been a reorganization of Sergeants and Chief Femino confirmed that some analysis has been done to better allocate the workload and the structure has changed from last year. The Chief added that he also reclassified the Chief's Aide position to the Compliance Division, with reassigned duties. The Chair inquired about whether this position could be civilianized, along with that of the Licensing Sergeant at City Hall and the station officer at the Police Station and the Chief will research, though he disagreed that the duties of the station officer should fall to a civilian. Chair Scott asked for information on how many times in the past five years the Licensing Sergeant has had to use his powers of arrest. Chief Femino also clarified that it is a Sergeant assigned to the Licensing Commission and an officer assigned to Inspectional Services through the Mayor's Office. Further, of the 52 patrol officers, the Chief estimated that nine are assigned in the station officer role.

Councilor Niedergang noted that many problems are as or more serious than the crime problem, but other departments are not nearly as well funded. He suggested cutting between \$2-\$3M to deploy among other departments, and will be making specific recommendations to do so. Councilor Rossetti commented that she reviewed all of the constituent feedback and she consulted with Ms. Molina Capers, who urged that reacting impulsively is discouraged, but working to build trust in the community, and working to protect the Police Department from resentment from residents and staff are critical. Councilor Rossetti noted that if we decimate the police budget now, it will not be worth having hired a RSJ Director. Councilor Niedergang emphasized that his proposed cuts are based on what he thinks is unnecessary spending, regardless of reimagining policing.

Councilor Ballantyne asked the Chief to provide a list of positions within the Police Department that are responsible for communicating with other community based organizations, such as referring individuals for services.

Chair Scott asked about the line for Public Safety Supplies (558003) and what that encompasses. The Chief indicated that it includes cameras, body armor, trauma response kits, supplies for the K-9 officer, and naloxone.

Animal Control

The Chief noted that the personnel increase is due to negotiated collective bargaining agreements and merit increases. The decrease in ordinary maintenance comes from savings in kennel costs, as the City completed a remodel and no longer needs to utilize outside services. Chair Scott asked when the most recent Animal Control Officer was hired and it was within the last six weeks. Ms. Racaniello will confirm whether this position will go through the confirmation of appointments process. Councilor Strezo asked what line reflects the veterinarian bills and the Chief will research that and provide a response. Mr. Mastrobuoni noted that this is reflected in line 529010, for Kennels.

E-911

The Chief noted that the personnel increase is due to negotiated collective bargaining agreements and merit increases. The supervisor for this unit is the Administrative Division Captain. Chair Scott asked about demographic data for the employees in the E-911 Division, and also for the Patrol Officers.

(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:	LAI D 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:	LAI D 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:	LAI D 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
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Referenced Material:

- FY22 SPD Budget Final
- Public Comment - L LoPresti
- Public Comment - D Kippenberger
- Public Comment - A Catatao - 6-14-21