



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

July 9, 2020

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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	Present	
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	

Others present: Chief David Fallon, Nick Antanavica, Mayor Joe Curtatone, Steve MacEachern - DPW, Denise Taylor - Communications, Michael Mastrobuoni - SomerStat, Ed Bean - Finance, Emily Monea - Chief of Staff, Doug Kress - HHS, Annie Connor - Mayor's Office, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Scott and adjourned at 12:11 AM on a roll call vote of 10 in favor (Councilors Clingan, Mbah, White, Rossetti, Strezo, Niedergang, Davis, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen and Scott), none against and 1 absent (Councilor Ballantyne).

1. Review of FY-21 Budget

Chair Scott outlined the procedure for tonight's meeting. At the request of many councilors, the Police Budget will be taken up first. Councilor McLaughlin was recused from the Personal Services portion of the Police Department Budget. Mr. Mastrobuoni informed members about updates posted on the budget site.

Councilor Niedergang spoke about the reinvestments made by the Mayor utilizing funds cut from the Police Department budget and he detailed his proposal to cut an additional \$500,000 from that budget, suggesting that those funds could be reallocated to the city's housing efforts. Councilor Niedergang made a motion **To reduce line 511000 (Salaries) in the Police Department budget by \$500,000.**

Councilor Davis weighed in on the proposal and expounded on the benefits of reallocating those funds as described. Councilor Strezo asked Chief Fallon why the 6 patrol vacancies have remained unfilled to this point and the Chief explained the process for hiring officers, including civil service requirements, exams, background checks, academy training, etc. Councilor Strezo said she wants to know what effect cutting positions would have on the rest of the force and the Chief stated that members of the community, as well as community agencies, have asked for an increased police presence and that reducing staff below 88 will directly affect officer wellness. Councilor Strezo asked for assurances that if these funds are cut, they would go to needed social services. Mayor Curtatone responded, saying that all options would be considered before a decision is made on reallocation of any funds. Councilor Strezo asked about the SPD bicycle unit and the Chief said this, and community policing, could be cutback by a budget cut. Mr. Bean noted a technical point about budgeting positions, noting that the legal obligation is to fully budget positions, adding that funds become available when retirements happen - not before. Councilor Ewen-Campen supports the motion and thinks that the cuts can be made while maintaining public safety. Councilor Mbah spoke about his prior motion (at an earlier meeting) to reduce overtime in the SPD and to use those funds to improve the lives of the black and brown community. He stated that he can't support a motion to cut funds from salaries without protections for officers of color. Chief Fallon explained that eliminating a Deputy Chief position could have a trickle-down effect of demoting 4 officers and could culminate in layoffs. Councilor Clingan will not support this motion because residents rely on police and expect them to come when called. He is in favor of police reform and civilian oversight, but to make cuts just to make a point is wrong.

Councilor White asked about response time and Chief Fallon recounted a time when the number of cars patrolling went from 7 to 6, and back to 7 after 2 weeks due to increased response times. After the first round of FY-21 cuts to the SPD, Chief Fallon determined that funds were not available to hire the 6 new patrol officers. If this motion passes, another 6-9 officers would have to be cut, creating a strictly reactive force. Councilor White doesn't believe the best approach is to make cuts without analyzing the impacts and he will not support the motion. Councilor Rossetti and Councilor Ballantyne will not support the motion. Councilor Strezo is in favor of reforming the police department but not at the risk of public safety, therefore she will not support this motion. Councilor Clingan spoke about the vacant patrol positions and some of the reasons it's been difficult to fill them, e.g., the residency requirement. He commented that councilors have patted new officers on the back, and now some councilors want to turn their backs on those same people. He does favor reviewing the command structure, but through attrition. Mr. Mastrobuoni explained that the 6 patrol positions have been reduced to 1 month to keep the positions on the books in case retirements might allow them to be filled. Chair Scott spoke about the reserve list.

The motion failed on roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Niedergang, Davis, Ewen-Campen and Scott), 6 against (Councilors Clingan, Mbah, White, Rossetti, Strezo, and Ballantyne) and 1 recused (McLaughlin).

The committee adjourned at 8:46 PM and reconvened at 8:51 PM.

General

Councilor Rossetti asked about the GLX, Medical Marijuana and the Infiltration/Inflow stabilization funds.

Councilor Rossetti asked about the Capital Projects Maintenance Manager position and Mr. Mastrobuoni said that it will be funded for 6 months, as listed in the budget. Councilor Rossetti asked about the Stormwater Project Manager position and Mr. Mastrobuoni explained that it doesn't affect the general fund.

Councilor Rossetti asked Mr. Kress about the Professional and Technical Services line and the \$50,000 discrepancy in his reporting of the line balance. Mr. Kress would like to discuss the Float Nurse position after the budget is passed and the plan for re-opening schools is known. There are no nurse floats at the present time, even after increasing the salary last year. Councilor Rossetti asked that the job descriptions for the 3 vacant nurse positions be forwarded to each councilor.

DPW

Councilor McLaughlin made a motion **to reduce line 511000 (Salaries) in the DPW Highway Department budget by \$109, 075**, explaining that he doesn't think the Fleet Manager position is needed.

The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote of 11 in favor (Councilors Clingan, Mbah, White, Rossetti, Strezo, Niedergang, Davis, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Ballantyne and Scott).

Mayor Curtatone informed the members that the Administration would schedule an Executive Session with respect to an ongoing review of the Department of Public Works Fleet Division or before the 14th of July.

ISD

Councilor Rossetti spoke about the new construction safety fee and said that when she asked for a list of communities who have implemented this fee, Mr. Antanavica was unable to produce one. Tonight, Mr. Antanavica said that Lynn and New York have implemented this fee. Inspectors will need to have 30 hours of OSHA training and in order to implement the program, another position is needed in the department. Councilor Rossetti believes that this is a tax and she is opposed to it. Mr. Antanavica was asked why the city needs to hire new people to do something that could be completed by signing a state affidavit. Councilor Niedergang disagrees and feels that this is exactly how the city should be getting revenue. Councilor McLaughlin spoke about a memo regarding rodents and said that he has a lack of faith that ISD will address the issue or implement a plan. Mr. Antanavica replied that inspectors are doing what they can to address the issue and that the amount of baiting has been increased. Steps have been taken to bait at least twice a week and to make inspectors more identifiable. Councilor Ewen-Campen would like to move the baiting program away from ISD and may consider proposing such a change next year. Councilor Rossetti noted that the form for residents to request ISD to place bait boxes on their property is nowhere to be found. Councilor Niedergang asked about a vacant position.

Councilor McLaughlin made a motion **That the mayor's office allocate funds to the City Council for anti-racism training and education**.

The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote of 11 in favor (Councilors Clingan, Mbah, White, Rossetti, Strezo, Niedergang, Davis, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Ballantyne and Scott).

Councilor Ballantyne made a motion **that the Mayor agrees to budget for and to hire a research**

institute and/or individual expert in gender studies and women studies to implement equitable investments in girls and that these experts conduct research in the Fall of 2020, conduct a Pilot/Praxis in spring of 2021, evaluate, and develop an implementation plan by May 2021.

The motion passed unanimously on a roll call vote of 11 in favor (Councilors Clingan, Mbah, White, Rossetti, Strezo, Niedergang, Davis, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Ballantyne and Scott).

Unfinished Business

- 2. Motion by Councilor Rossetti to reduce line number 571001 (In State Conferences) in the City Council Budget by \$1,199.00**

RESULT: APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]

AYES: Scott, Ballantyne, White Jr., Rossetti, Mbah, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Niedergang, Davis, Strezo

- 3. Motion by Councilor Rossetti to reduce line 572000 (Out of State Travel) in the Health and Human Services Department's budget by \$1,350.**

RESULT: APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]

AYES: Scott, Ballantyne, White Jr., Rossetti, Mbah, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Niedergang, Davis, Strezo

- 4. Motion by Councilor Rossetti to reduce line 542001 (Printing and Stationery) in SomerStat's budget by \$16,600.**

Councilor Rossetti explained that this expense is for the city's Happiness Survey. Staff explained why the funds should not be cut from the budget.

The motion was withdrawn.

- 5. Motion by Councilor Scott to reduce line 530000 (Special Items Professional and Technical Services) by \$150,000 in the Executive Administration budget.**

Chair Scott explained that these funds would be used for a police commission and for work that is underway and belongs in the legislative branch. It is listed in the budget as a process to be run by the Mayor's Office. Chair Davis thought that funds for the Racial and Social Justice Department (RSJ) didn't make it into the budget, saying that he heard that the funds were for a consultant to advise the mayor in developing the RSJ Department. Today he was told that the funds were to be used by the Director of RSJ when developing the department. Ms. Monea explained that the \$150,000 is for the Director to take on re-imagining policing and setting requirements for distribution of funds within the RSJ Department and not for a consultant, noting however, that the funds could be used as such. Ms. Connor spoke about Councilor Davis' earlier proposal for a community process run by the City Council and stated that the Administration is happy to support the request, but it can't be done by the City Council alone. It needs to be done in conjunction with the Director of RSJ, when that person is appointed. Ms. Connor will update

a previous memo to reflect the scope of the RSJ Director per conversations held the past few days with Councilor Davis and Chair Scott.

Councilor Scott commented that the City Council has created groundbreaking legislation in the past 2 years and he appreciates the funding support to continue it work.

The motion was withdrawn.

6. Motion by Councilor Scott to reduce line 521001 (Electricity) by \$900,000 in the DPW Buildings and Grounds budget.

Councilor Scott explained that the motion was made to ensure that the department levels are appropriately scaled, based on historical data and he explained how he arrived at his figures. Mr. Mastrobuoni explained that there are 2 accounting methods, and that using the gap method, the department used 95% of its budget in FY-19. This year's budget is \$300,000 less than FY-20's. Mr. MacEachern reported that if this cut is approved, other services may suffer.

Chair Scott amended his motion to reduce the amount of the cut from \$900,000 to \$50,000.

The motion was passed as amended.

RESULT: APPROVED AS AMENDED. [UNANIMOUS]

AYES: Scott, Ballantyne, White Jr., Rossetti, Mbah, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Niedergang, Davis, Strezo

7. Motion by Councilor Scott to reduce line 553003 (Ready Mix Concrete) by \$60,000 in the DPW Highway budget.

Councilor Rossetti understood that the Commissioner stated that the funds were needed to enlarge sidewalk bump-outs and sidewalk repairs. Mr. MacEachern said that the excess line balance is due to the downtime caused by COVID-19. Councilor Scott reminded members that the cut is reflective of the bottom line rather than the specific line number. Councilors McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen and Ballantyne are opposed to the motion.

The motion was withdrawn.

8. Motion by Councilor Rossetti to reduce line 548006 (Motor Parts and Accessories) by \$100,000 in the DPW Fleet budget.

Councilor Rossetti noted that there has been an excess of funds in this line since 2018. Chair Scott supports the motion, based on some potential mismanagement. Chair White asked if Mr. MacEachern could speak to the motion, given his statement last night that upon advice of legal counsel, he could not legally speak about that budget. Mr. MacEachern again said that the excess is due to the lack of work due to COVID-19.

RESULT: APPROVED. [UNANIMOUS]

AYES: Scott, Ballantyne, White Jr., Rossetti, Mbah, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Niedergang, Davis, Strezo

9. **Motion by Councilor Rossetti that the Administration consider reallocating any funds cut from the DPW Fleet Management budget to the immediate needs of the community during these COVID times. The motion was tabled by the Finance Committee on July 8, 2020.**

The motion was amended by Councilor Rossetti to read as follows:

That the Administration consider reallocating any funds cut from the DPW Fleet Management budget to the Office of Housing Stability during these COVID times.

RESULT: APPROVED AS AMENDED. [UNANIMOUS]

AYES: Scott, Ballantyne, White Jr., Rossetti, Mbah, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Niedergang, Davis, Strezo

10. **Motion by Councilor Ballantyne that the Administration increase the Community Engagement Specialist - Nepali interpreter position in the Communications & Community Engagement budget to a full-time position. The motion was tabled by the Finance Committee on July 8, 2020.**

At the request of Councilor Mbah, Ms. Taylor reviewed the work performed by this position.

RESULT: APPROVED. [8 TO 3]

AYES: Ballantyne, White Jr., Rossetti, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Niedergang, Davis, Strezo

NAYS: Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott, Wilfred N. Mbah, Jesse Clingan

11. **Motion by Councilor Ballantyne that the Administration add 10 hours to the Community Engagement Specialist - Spanish position in the Communications & Community Engagement. The motion was tabled by the Finance Committee on July 8, 2020.**

The motion was amended by Councilor Ballantyne to read as follows:

That the Administration add an additional 10-hour position to the Community Engagement Specialist - Spanish position in the Communications & Community Engagement.

RESULT: APPROVED AS AMENDED. [10 TO 1]

AYES: Scott, Ballantyne, White Jr., Rossetti, Mbah, McLaughlin, Ewen-Campen, Niedergang, Davis, Strezo

NAYS: Jesse Clingan

Handout:

- RSJ Project summary - updated 7-9-20