



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

October 6, 2020
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	

Others present: Khushbu Webber-Mayor's Office, Alan Inacio-OSPCD, Omar Boukili-Incident Commander, Chris Major-Fire Department, Patti Contente-Police Department, Linda Dubuque-Treasury, Balkys Sicard-DPW, Kate Hartke-Grants, Doug Kress-Human Health Services, Charles Breen-Fire Department, Oliver Sellers-Garcia-Sustainability, Michael Mastrobuoni-SomerStat, Nick Antanavica-ISD, Tom Galligani-OSPCD, Michael Ross-Sustainability, Walter Gray-Power Options, Edward Bean-Finance/Auditing, Matt Shortsleeve-Solect Energy, James Stanford-Police Department, Vanessa Boukili-OSPCD and Hannah Pappenheim-Solicitor's Office.

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Chairperson Scott and adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Approval of the September 8, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Covid Finance Updates

210035: That the Director of Finance update this Council on all money received to date related to the COVID-19 situation.

Mr. Bean provided a summary of the COVID-19 grants that included DPH grant \$200k along with several other grants. Additionally, it was stated that the Secretary of State of put aside funding for the upcoming election ballot boxes. Other grants included funding for taxi rides for food, DOJ for fire department overtime during the pandemic, and CvRF \$7.1M reimbursable grant, and grants to reopen schools. Please see attached slides with full details of the presentation. It was stated that OSCPD repurposed \$1.2M in CDBG grants to also assist small businesses during the pandemic. Ms. Hartke talked about FEMA reimbursement - which is not a

grant 0 and the 25% cost share which is the responsibility of the applicant. While FEMA will only reimburse 75% of the pandemic expenses. The CARES Act coronavirus relief funding program provides direct payments. The federal treasury is responsible for the CARES Act dollars. The Baker administration distributes the funds. The only 2 direct recipients in MA are Boston and Plymouth County. Expenses cannot be appropriated as of 3/27 and cannot request money that the city has already paid for in the budget. Funds must be spent by the end of calendar year 2020. Election expenses, distance learning, IT, social distancing measures, accelerated teleworks, subscriptions for meetings can use a portion of the funding for cost sharing for the program. There are a few limitations for the funding that were published in early September with limits on PPE, for public employees who are not 1st responders. PPE and cleaning costs need to move from FEMA allocated to CARES funding dollars. The artist and small business state guidance cannot be used. School buildings are eligible for funding, not public buildings. Ms. Hartke stated that FEMA submissions and CARES ACT, public assistance program must be submitted by next Thursday. Other deadlines for full application deadline are 2 weeks later. She also stated that CARES Act is for secondary needs. There will be cost shifting from FEMA. The slides showed the city's really big expenses, such as HVAC, testing for students and teachers, air quality monitor, contact tracing, equipment, remote learning and recreation programs for k-2. Mr. Bean stated IAM is putting together estimates for HVAC which could be millions of dollars. Contact tracing is critical in reopening the schools. Mr. Inacio stated that HUD CARES Act allowed supplemental funding of \$1.4M and \$700k and repurposed some CDBG funds for small business loan program. A Request for Proposal process happened over late spring and early summer for \$1.8M for disabilities transportation and workforce training for jobs lost over the pandemic. He is hoping to use some of the CBDG for business assistance, which is still under consideration. Mr. Bean stated that grants for school department would be for expenses additional staff for special needs, emotional support, potential transportation costs and the city is looking at \$500k for Chromebooks. Mr. Gorsky from the school department was not able to attend tonight's meeting. Councilor Rossetti suggested a need to have a meeting between the city's finance committee and school committee to understand what type of crisis they may be in. During the past budget session, the school committee stated they reserve the right to come to the city council for support. Councilor Rossetti asked if there is any consideration to waiving or decreasing license and any other fees during the pandemic. Mr. Inacio stated for businesses that receive CDBG loans, they must document their operating expenses to waive and be forgiven. Mr. Bean wants to minimize the impact on the general fund, to avoid potential cuts. He also stated that the revenue will be coming in for 2020 and the city did waive retail and food permits for a number of business totaling \$180k loss. Mr. Bean is waiting to hear from the state on hotel/motel revenue. Mr. Galligani is eagerly waiting for more funds to help more businesses. He stated the Planning department has been working behind the scenes with Mr. Inacio and his team on which CDBG funds are flexible enough to help the businesses. Councilor Rossetti stated license renewals will be due in December and today she learned that the president will not be sending out any additional stimulus funds until after the election. She feels that small businesses are hurting and the loans they have already taken will need additional support. Councilor Rossetti stated the need for small businesses for help during snow storms and the need for outdoor heating systems. Mr. Bean stated not enough resources to help all the needs of the city and he will have a clearer picture in the next month because the city will need to set the taxes. Councilor White stated it's important to know the amount of fees for licenses to be waived and the grand total. Councilor White stated some business licenses are

very expensive. Councilor White would like data on city issued permits and how much so the administration and city council can look at all possibilities. Mr. Bean will work with the City Clerk for a total amount and the different fees for licenses. Chair Scott asked if the information will be available ahead of the next Finance Committee on October 20th. Mr. Bean will talk to Mr. Long.

Councilor Ballantyne concurs with White and Rossetti and put an order in that the administration consider helping businesses with license whether be installments and how it might impact the city's finances. She would like the information before the next meeting on October 20th.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210036: That the Director of Finance update this Council on all expenditures, encumbrances and anticipated expenses to date related to the COVID-19 situation.

See 210035

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210117: That the Director of Finance provide a written rolling cash flow analysis every 2 weeks during this COVID-19 emergency and include forecasts to ensure sufficient operating liquidity by estimating the available cash deposits, expected inflows, and required disbursements.

See 210035

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210592: That the Director of Finance share financial updates for YTD revenues and expenditures for all Covid-related line items.

See 210035

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Information Requests

210302: That the Chief of Police report to this Council, no later than June 18, 2020 a description of any military equipment purchased or received as a federal grant, currently in the possession of the Police Department.

Police Deputy Chief Stanford stated the only equipment received were 26 rifles. He will a list together in November with funding sources. The chair asked why the delay, since this request was several months ago. Deputy Chief stated the request is labor intensive and each purchase has to be researched by hand. He stated there is a list of military equipment, but officers were assigned to other functions during the pandemic and could not compile a new list. The list will be available within 30 days. Councilor Ballantyne asked how the inventory was kept in the police dept. Deputy Chief Stanford stated there is no single overriding comprehensive list. The list would include weapons in possession, but wanted to provide a response that included the source of funding for each purpose. He would like to make sure it's a comprehensive list with

all information. Chair Scott asked about items 8 and 9 which are very similar but not about exclusively about firearms or military equipment. That request had no response either. For equipment purchased by the city which is then given to officers to become personal property of the officers, Deputy Chief Stanford stated that the police department cannot retrieve information prior to six years ago when the city switched to MUNIS.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210438: That the Director of Finance report to this Council, all actual state aid appropriations versus budgeted (anticipated) state aid.

Mr. Bean thought he responded to this last August. He stated DOR allowed municipalities to budget less than level funded unrestricted aid. The state is still facing \$4B deficit. He believes there will be cuts in state aid 2022. Councilor Rossetti asked about additional funding \$6.6M received from the state offsetting the appropriation made from Free Cash to . Mr. Bean will take a look at new growth and see how to reconfigure the cash. He also reiterated that the city should find a way to help the small businesses and he does not have any data on the hotel/motel revenue. Mr. Bean believes the food revenue will come in on budget.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210455: That the Chief of Police provide to this Council an itemized statement of all materials, tools, and property owned or leased by the City for use of the Police Department.

Police Deputy Chief Stanford stated the request is overly broad and can respond to specific items. Leasing of buildings is not controlled by the police department. Chair Scott stated there are probably different inventories for various items, providing separate inventories would be satisfactory. Chair Scott asked if he should submit a public records request. Deputy Chief Stanford stated during the pandemic resources have been reallocated to other goals. Chair Scott would like follow up later this week for whatever inventory records exist.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210456: That the Chief of Police provide to this Council an itemized statement of any equipment purchased on behalf of employees of the Police Department which became the individual employee's property.

Deputy Chief Stanford asked for a timeframe for this request such as how many years. He stated that bulletproof vests are purchased under a federal grant and have a 5-year lifespan service. No responsive report was made.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210580: Conveying the executed Memorandum of Agreement with DCR for the Dilboy Complex.

Councilor Ballantyne asked what the changes from the previous MOA. Ms. Pappenheim stated the best option would be to send changes in writing and Ms. Lathan would be the best person to

provide the response. Most of changes are on the operation side. Additionally, she stated that some of the bigger changes are on capital improvement that the city will undertake, which is page 22 of agreement.

A written response will be sent to Councilor Ballantyne.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210591: That the Director of Finance and the City Assessor consider a property tax abatement for landlords who lease to artists and arts and cultural organizations, tying the property tax reductions to rental relief for those tenants.

Mr. Bean stated Mr. Golden has a written response to this one and item 16. Mr. Golden could not be in attendance tonight. The response will be sent to the clerks as a communication for Thursday night's meeting as a late item. Councilor Ballantyne stated she will pass on the information to the artists and arts cultural organizations.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210625: That all Department Heads share their FY21 missions and goals and FY20 achievements at this Council's next meeting on October 8, 2020.

It was stated that Mr. Mastrobuoni sent Councilor Ballantyne an email with the requested information and that it is now on the city's website.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210628: That the Director of Finance and the Director of SPCD discuss potential appropriations for requests from Somerville Cares (see attachment), restaurants and bars, arts and cultural organizations, and other groups.

Councilor Ballantyne asked Mr. Bean how they determine the allocation from the appropriations for various organizations. Additionally, how does the city collect the requests and consider making the appropriation to provide help. Mr. Bean said the state is setting guidelines for aid and stated if Boston can do it for the artist, then why can't Somerville. Mr. Bean will have a better understanding in December and will be able to determine if more stimulus money is coming in. Mr. Bean is requesting the state be more flexible in how the funds can be spent.

Ms. Hartke stated the state does not look at their guidelines as set in stone.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210626: That the Director of Finance and the Budget Director discuss ways to improve the user experience for OpenGov.

Mr. Mastrobuoni stated he appreciated everyone's patience on the new software and happy to receive feedback from the council. Chair Scott stated there was a lag in information on the website for budget cuts and asked if everything has been updated. Mr. Mastrobouni stated the files will be updated in a batch. He did change police and there will be a final update coming soon. He also stated there will be a separate link on the city's website with a PDF of proposed

budget prior to cuts and a final. The webpages are the budget documents, and he created a PDF of all information along with the positions. The appendix has the names matched up to the positions.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Policy Items

209490: Requesting approval of an annual Vacant Property Registration Fee of \$500.

Mr. Galligani talked about this last time to consider establishing a fee. Some wanted a relatively high fee, while others were concerned about the impact on the property owners. There has been a number closing of small businesses with more to come. Mr. Galligani and Mr. Antanavica talked to the legal staff and mayor's office. There wasn't much flexibility as the ordinance is written. No way to be consistent and fair with the current ordinance. They had a proposed a strategy to approve a fee to move forward. The mayor is poised with an order to eliminate the fee for temporary times during COVID for maybe 6-12 months. At a later date, can reevaluate the fees after the pandemic. The mayor can waive all fees but require owners to register their property. The ordinance still allows the city to fine property owners, if necessary, to alleviate any property or health concerns. Councilor Mbah asked if there is a policy to incorporate for folks who have a reason for vacant properties to relieve them of the fees. Mr. Galligani believes in the next 6 months may be able to rewrite and offer a tiered structure. Once they have the information and how it impacts the property owners to set up ordinance to make sense based on the reality of COVID-19. Councilor Rossetti appreciates collecting data and does not want to vote this fee and let the mayor waive the fee. She asked how the communication will go out from the mayor. Ms. Webber stated she believes the communication would be what is reflected by Mr. Galligani and Mr. Antanavica. There are concerns on how the communication maybe interpreted to the community. Councilor Rossetti asked Mr. Galligani to speak to the Mayor before meeting on Thursday and she did not want the communication to look like the council wants a fee and then the mayor waives it. Mr. Galligani stated the council can set a fee of \$0 or \$1.00. Councilor White stated the city council can always take a vote to reduce back to a \$1.00. Councilor Ballantyne stated that last time she was not supportive a fee. She also stated that Councilor McLaughlin put this forward for large property owners. She wants to go with the understanding to accumulate information with a low fee and incentive for property owners to register. **Councilor Ballantyne motioned and it was accepted to amend the fee from \$500 to \$50.00.** Mr. Galligani stated the mayor could still waive the fee. Councilor Rossetti her vote is for the wavier of any kind. Chair Scott wants a stiffer amendment. Councilor White stated the registration fee and the fine are for those who do not register. After 90 days if known property not registered, the City can fine the property owner.

RESULT:	APPROVED AS AMENDED
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209562: That the Director of Finance, or the appropriate department, consider raising the limit on assets seniors may claim to qualify for senior tax exemptions.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209567: That the City Treasurer, the Chief Assessor and the Director of Finance discuss with this Council the possibility of switching to bi-annual tax bills, and including a simple "explainer" with each bill.

Ms. Dubuque and Mr. Bean opposed the proposal to convert from quarterly to bi-annual tax bills. They stated that cashflow is critical especially doing the pandemic. Mr. Bean believes the bonding agency would see this as a step backwards. The treasurer agrees with Mr. Bean. She stated the city is not having any cashflow issues, even during the pandemic. She is not worried about monthly or weekly payments with cashflow and objects to going to semi-annual tax bills. Councilor Ballantyne is totally supportive of Bean and Dubuque decision. Bi-annual would hurt senior's cashflow. Ms Dubuque will reach out to Councilor Ewen Campen about this decision.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

210004: That the Administration update this Council on opportunities to provide universal broadband internet access in Somerville.

The committee received written response and Ms. Webber will submit response through MinuTraq. Additionally, a report was submitted to council. Councilor Mbah asked about people in the community who do not have internet service. Ms. Webber will see if there's data on hand and will provide to the council.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

210221: That the Director of Finance discuss providing small businesses the option to pay the Licensing Commission's annual license renewal fees in installments instead of all at once.

Councilor Ballantyne asked whether administration fees can be financially managed at the request of a small businesses. Mr. Bean states he will have to reevaluate all the revenue of the city before deciding on this matter. Mr. Bean will talk to the City Clerk about this item before the November meeting.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

210483: That the Administration consider relief for local small businesses as it relates to their annual renewal of licenses and associated fees.

See 210221

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

210229: That the Chief of Police prohibit the purchase and use of military technology and eliminate any military stockpiles the department currently has.

Deputy Chief Stanford was not aware this was on the agenda. The only government equipment provided through the 1033 program is the 26 rifles which are primarily used for training

purposes. Chair Scott asked about tear gas and it was stated there is no tear gas in the police department. Chair Scott asked Ms. Webber to provide a written response on this request.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Appropriation Requests

210564: Requesting the appropriation of \$240,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund for the FY21 Tree planting program.

Dr. Boukili stated there were no tree planning funds in the budget. Mr. Inacio stated this was not put in the budget due to issues with the pandemic. Mr. Bean stated that when times are better, this will go back into general funds. It was stated that in FY20 there was \$150k and another \$150k in stabilization funds.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210565: Requesting a transfer of \$13,228 from the Fire Department Ordinary Maintenance Account to the Fire Alarm Ordinary Maintenance Account to fund a technical service agreement for a 911 line into Fire Alarm.

Chief Breen and Deputy Chief Major stated this is a maintenance agreement and in the past the state paid for the center. The city is now a dual center and will have to pay for 911 line going into fire alarm.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210566: Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$2,332.89 unencumbered using available funds in the DPW Lights and Lines budget.

Ms. Sicard stated the original request was for \$160k which was the total amount of the invoice. She resubmitted the request for the unencumbered amount only.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210567: Requesting acceptance of a \$298,280 grant with no new match required, from the MA Department of Mental Health to the Police Department, for Crisis Intervention Team training.

Ms. Contente 2nd year of 5 year cycle with a regional grant serving 38 municipal departments. The city has had the same grant for 8 years. She also stated that failing to accept grant would significantly impact and eliminate the regional program.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210568: Requesting acceptance of a \$99,605 grant with no new match required, from the MA Department of Energy Resources Green Communities program to the Office of Sustainability & Environment for energy efficiency projects.

Mr. Ross will be project managing this project. The grant is for a certification program for Mr. Ross, work at DPW steam traps controls and LED lighting and smart controls.

RESULT: **APPROVED**

210569: Requesting acceptance of a \$25,602 grant that requires a match, from the Metro Mayors Shannon Initiative to the Police Department for youth violence prevention.

Deputy Chief Stanford stated this is an annual grant. The match requirement is \$7k

RESULT: **APPROVED**

210570: Requesting acceptance of a \$2,250 grant with no new match required, from the MA Cultural Council to the Arts Council for operational and programming support.

Mr. Jenkins stated supplemental grants for funds already received.

RESULT: **APPROVED**

210598: Requesting acceptance of a \$111,500 grant with no new match required, from MADot to the SPCD Mobility Division for Mystic Avenue Shared Streets improvements.

Mr. Inacio stated Somerville's portion of joint program with city of Medford for bus lane and walking lanes.

RESULT: **APPROVED**

210599: Requesting approval of a time-only extension for the FY17 Morse Kelley Playground CPA Grant for an additional 3 years.

RESULT: **APPROVED**

210600: Requesting approval of a time-only extension for the FY17 Healey Schoolyard Design CPA contract for an additional 3 years.

RESULT: **APPROVED**

210601: Requesting approval of a time-only extension for the FY17 CPA grant contract for the Henry Hansen Park Design for an additional 3 years.

RESULT: **APPROVED**

210602: Requesting approval for a time-only extension of the FY17 Milk Row Cemetery Open Space Master Plan CPA contract through October 2021.

RESULT: **APPROVED**

210646: Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$106,292.07 unencumbered using available funds in the DPW Building and Grounds budget.

See 210566

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210647: Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$30,210.49 unencumbered using available funds in the DPW Highway budget.

See 210566

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210648: Requesting approval to pay a variety of prior year invoices totaling \$17,214.11 using available funds in the DPW Administration budget.

See 210566

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210649: Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$4,014.19 unencumbered using available funds in the DPW Fleet budget.

See 210566

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210650: Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice for \$220 using available funds in the Inspectional Services Department's Staff Development Account for staff training.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210651: Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$96 using available funds in the Health and Human Services Professional & Technical Account for interpreter services.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210652: Requesting acceptance of a \$46,800 grant with no new match required, from Metropolitan Area Planning Council to the Health and Human Services Department to reduce transportation barriers to food access.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210653: Requesting acceptance of a \$37,315 grant with no new match required, from the MA Department of Mental Health to the Police Department for the Jail Diversion Program.

Ms. Contente another grant renewal since 2012. This is the 3rd year of 5-year cycle. Just for FY21 to fund jail diversion program for one full time staff person to be resources for the department. Councilor Mbah asked for explanation of the program. Ms. Contente stated this program engages persons with emotional stress with law enforcement. If someone receives a complaint can work with Somerville district court with treatment. Ms. Contente stated they average 5-10 diversions a year.

RESULT:

APPROVED

210654: Requesting acceptance of a \$5,000 grant with no new match required, from the MA Emergency Management Agency to the Fire Department for emergency management equipment.

RESULT:

APPROVED

210655: Requesting approval to enter into a power purchase agreement with Solect Energy Development for a solar system at the East Somerville Community School.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia and Mr. Ross introduced Mr. Shortsleeve from Solect Energy and Mr. Gray from Power Options to present on bringing two solar projects to two schools. There were a lot of effort for the roof for the high school to be ready for a solar system. Mr. Ross the energy manager for the city working with team for the new high school. He also stated these prices allow the city to lock prices in for 20 years. Councilor Mbah asked why only these two schools and are there plans to expand to other buildings. Mr. Ross plans to look at other buildings. East Somerville and the high school have appropriate roof tops to handle the solar panels. Once roofs are upgraded, they will look for future buildings to add solar panels to the roofs. He also stated these are 20 years easement. There will be ongoing maintenance for other pieces of equipment to ensure the solar panels are up and running. Councilor Rossetti asked Mr. Sellers-Garcia when they will begin the installation. Mr. Shortsleeve stated they are aiming for the spring for East Community School and will coordinate with high school project team perhaps during with the punch list. They have had discussions with Mr. Raiche on the timeline and when the roof will be ready. Mr. Shortsleeve states it will take about 4 months to prepare for installation on the high school. Councilor Rossetti wants to be alerted immediately is there are issues with Eversource.

RESULT:

APPROVED

210656: Requesting approval to enter into a power purchase agreement with Solect Energy Development for a solar system at the High School.

See 210655

RESULT:

APPROVED

210657: Requesting approval of an easement to Solect Energy Development for installation, maintenance, and operation of a roof-top solar energy system at the East Somerville Community School.

See 210655

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210658: Requesting approval of an easement to Solect Energy Development for installation, maintenance, and operation of a roof-top solar energy system at the High School.

See 210655

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210659: Requesting approval of a time-only contract extension for the 2017 street resurfacing contract with D&R General Contracting Inc.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210660: Requesting approval of the 2020-2021 HUD One Year Action Plan, for CDBG, HOME, and ESG programming.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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210661: City Solicitor seeking approval of the settlement of a pending claim for \$249,713.69, for damages to the City Hall Annex in 2018.

Ms. Pappenheim stated this request is for reimbursement for flooding damage at the City Annex.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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Handouts:

- Solect PO PPA Pres to Somerville FinCom 20201006 (with 210655, 210656, 210657, 210658)
- COVID Grants Presentation (with 210035, 210036, 210117, 210592)
- BOA DOCKET #209562 210591 (with 209562, 210591)