



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 8, 2025

6:00 PM

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Davis and adjourned at 8:39 PM on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Burnley, Clingan Scott and Wilson), none against and none absent.

Others present:

Alan Inacio - Senior Accountant Planning Board, Anoop Malik - Finance Manager HHS, William Fisher – Director of the Office of Emergency Management, Brendan Salisbury – Legislative and Policy Analyst, Jill Lathan – Commissioner DPW, Emily Wisdom - Director of Finance And Administration – SPD, Kate Hartke - Director of Grants and External Funds, Lauren Mahoney - Deputy Director - Office of Emergency Management, Cory Mian - Senior Vice President, Real Estate Development Preservation of Affordable Housing, Inc., Neha Singh – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0598](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of March 25, 2025.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

2. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0668](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee of the Whole Meeting of April 2, 2025.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

Prior Year Invoices

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0414](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$787.50 using available funds in the Parks and Recreation Department Recreation Supplies Account for ray catchers.

This item was discussed with item # 25-0493.
A memo has been submitted for this item.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0493](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$276.94 using available funds in the Parks and Recreation Department Kennedy Pool Account for paint supplies.

This item was discussed with item # 25-0414.
A memo has been submitted for this item.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0579](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoice totaling \$1,200 using available funds in the Human Resources Professional and Technical Services Account for arbitration services.

Director Singh informed the committee that the Administration wishes to withdraw this item.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE WITHDRAWN**

6. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0585](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$2,282.76 using available funds in the Police Department Public Safety Supply Account for bicycles, parts, and accessories.

Director Wisdom explained that the funds will be used to pay a prior year invoice for the purchase of 2 bicycles and miscellaneous bicycle parts and accessories. She also commented that the department is taking a pro-active approach to clear any open invoices. At the present time, the Police Department has 10-15 bicycles in good condition and is working to establish a regular maintenance schedule.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

Grant and Gift Acceptances

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0280](#))

Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$25,600 grant that requires an in-kind match which is a portion of the Director's salary, to the Office of Emergency Management for emergency management and Fire Department supplies.

Director Fisher explained that this is an annual grant from Homeland Security, disbursed through FEMA, that will be used to purchase clothing for the Emergency Management team, to roll out a program for the public titled "Until Help Arrives", to obtain EOC signs, video boards for communications, non-verbal handy talkers for use with non-verbal people, and lighting equipment. The only requirements of this grant are that it be used for Emergency Management and that the city provides a 100% funding match.

Chair Wilson inquired if efforts to provide resources for people displaced by a fire were still in operation and Director Fischer said there is a procedure in place utilizing the team from SFD, ISD, and the Red Cross to secure immediate resources. Councilor Clingan asked about having a city representative present for after-hour fires to facilitate securing resources for those affected.

Councilor Burnley noted that UHA programs may be paid by UASI grants and the director commented that the city is taking advantage of these. Councilor Burnley asked how decisions are made regarding what is considered an emergency and what resources will be deployed and the director stated that, in a general sense, the word emergency is a loose term and that from his perspective, if there's a way for the city to help someone, it will.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0531](#))

Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$3,000 grant with no new match required, from Somerville Cambridge Elder Services to the Council on Aging for senior transportation services.

A memo has been submitted for this item.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

Contracts and Easements

9. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0415](#)) Requesting the approval of a time-only contract extension for three years for the Somerville Hispanic Association for Community Development for restoration of 59 Cross Street.

Senior Accountant Inacio explained that this is a multi-year project and that part of the construction going on now involves the installation of an elevator. He noted that the prior CPA grant will have to be amended by extending it to 2028.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

Bonding

10. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0601](#)) Requesting authorization to borrow \$9,750,000 in a bond, and to appropriate the same amount for a portion of the costs associated with the development of the Clarendon Hill Phase II Housing Project.

Senior Accountant Inacio gave a brief presentation. Councilor Scott asked about the city's risk if, for example, the federal government shut off CDBG funding and Mr. Inacio said that the city will hold a collateral position of the property allowing it to sell the property to recoup its investment. An alternative payment mechanism would be to use funds from any CDBG coming in or on hand. The last option would be that the city would be responsible for it all. Councilor Scott asked about a prior developer, Red Gate, who had shown an interest in developing the property and Mr. Inacio replied that the company is no longer a partner or developer in the project, adding that a new RFP will be issued by the SHA for phase 3 of the project. Councilor Scott asked about the requirements and promises made by Red Gate and Mr. Inacio wasn't sure if they were part of the project and he will review those documents for any conditions that might have been attached. Ms. Mian said many are captured in the 40B documents and will be carried forward. She also told the committee that the RFP for construction of the market rate units will be issued by the SHA.

Councilor Mbah asked if this money has already been authorized and Mr. Inacio explained that there was a DIF authorization for phase 1 and also a CPA bond borrowing mechanism. This request is to essentially refinance the remaining \$6 million of DIF bonding and add \$3.75 million while retiring the entire DIF bond and taking it off the city's books. Mr. Inacio spoke about triggering the Davis-Bacon Prevailing Wage Law in phases 1 and 2.

Chair Wilson asked what would happen if revenues from the sale of the property are less than expected and Mr. Inacio explained that with HUD borrowing, there is a 3-year interest only payment option, but hopefully, CDGB funds would be available as well as tax revenue from the non-public

housing portion of the project. In any event, the city would recover whatever it could from the collateral value. He also noted that in the short-term borrowing window, there is no prepayment penalty, however, once the city enters into the lock-in period, it can negotiate the amortization schedule but would be responsible for the full interest amount. Chair Wilson asked about impacts on other projects/areas and Mr. Inacio said that it has been factored into the 5-year plan, adding that non-profit public service funding is capped at 15%. If cuts needed to be made, a review of projects would be done prior to any cuts.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

Appropriations

- 11. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0542](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$76,787.19 from the Medicinal Marijuana Stabilization Fund for the salary and fringe of the Prevention Services Coordinator for FY 2026.

Finance Manager Malik explained that this position would support the Youth Substance Misuse Prevention and Education activities, public school staff and other community partners. Councilor Scott asked if this is a different position than the Substance Use Prevention Coordinator and Mr. Malik said that the title has been changed and that the position is currently vacant but in the last stages of being filled. Councilor Scott inquired why, since the City Council can set the amount, is funding for a full year's salary is being requested now and Mr. Malik said that this appropriation would be for FY2026 and said that funds for the last few months of FY2025 are available.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

- 12. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0456](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$160,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Department of Public Works Repairs to Buildings Account for fabrication and installation of courts at Founders Rink.

A memo has been submitted for this item.

Commissioner Lathan presented 2 options, as follows:

- Option 1 - Recreation flooring laid year-round, and
- Option 2 - Recreation flooring laid part of the year, ice during the winter.

For each option, a detailed breakdown of expenses was provided, amounting to the following costs:

- Option 1 - there would be a one-time cost of \$154,688.
- Option 2 - there would be a one-time cost of \$97,988 plus an annual cost of \$153,010 for removal, installation and storage of the floor and creation and removal of ice, plus an approximate annual cost of \$90,000 to keep the rink cold during the skating months.

Commissioner Lathan explained that a contractor would be needed to handle 100% of the work of putting down and lifting up the flooring and icing, making it necessary to have a facilities company, such as FMC, to manage the rink for a short time. She also reported that ice time at the rink was not used by the high school and that the primary usage was by Somerville Youth Hockey. Chair Wilson inquired about a Zamboni and Commissioner Lathan said that the Zamboni at the Veterans Rick is owned by the DCR. The city did have its own Zamboni for the Founders Rink, but sold it, however, FMC has one, and any vendor selected to manage the rink would be responsible for providing one.

Chair Wilson commented that it was his understanding after the last meeting on this subject that the flooring could not be removed and he was relieved to hear otherwise and he asked if there would be funding in the future to go with Option 2. Councilor Scott commented that the question comes down to whether the Administration is willing to commit the funds needed for Option 2.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

Ordinances

13. Ordinance
(ID # [25-0375](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen
Amending the Code of Ordinances by adding Section 2-325 to Chapter 2, Article VI, Division 3 related to compensation for elected officials.

Analyst Salisbury reviewed the changes made to the originally submitted document and noted that, on the advice of the Solicitor's Office, a date should be included for referencing the annual average consumer price index.

Councilor Scott's motion *that the draft referenced in these minutes as "Finance - 2025-04-08 Amending Ch. 2 Art. VI Div. 3 Elected Official Cost of Living Adjustment (with 25-0375)" replace the attachment to item #25-0375 and be placed before this body* was approved on a Roll Call vote

of 4 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Clingan, Scott and Wilson), none against and 1 absent (Councilor Burnley).

Councilor Scott made a motion to amend Section 2-325 (a) by changing the increase percentage from two to four. The committee discussed the ramifications of this change and Councilor Clingan expressed his preference to have any increase tied directly to the change in the federal social security annual cost of living adjustments that come out in October of each year, after the third quarter inflation rates are assessed. After further discussion, Councilor Scott withdrew the motion.

The committee discussed the timing structure and felt that the December 31 date should be changed to January 1 for a variety of reasons.

Chair Wilson’s motion to amend Section 2-325 (a) by replacing the words “December 31” with “January 1” was approved on a Roll Call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Burnley, Clingan, Scott and Wilson), none against and none absent.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED AS AMENDED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

Orders and Resolutions

- 14. Order (ID # [25-0036](#))

By Councilor Strezo
That the Director of Finance discuss the path for City Councilors to receive administrative support staff to assist with City Council work and communication with constituents.

This item was discussed with item # 25-0037.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

- 15. Order (ID # [25-0037](#))

By Councilor Strezo
That the Director of Finance discuss the path for City Councilors to receive administrative support staff in the form of paid internships to assist City Councilors with City Council work and communication with constituents.

This item was discussed with item # 25-0036.

Chair Wilson reported that the City Clerk is working on this for FY2026.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

16. Order
(ID # [25-0251](#))
- By Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the Director of Racial and Social Justice provide an update on the citywide disparity study, including when the report will be made available to the public.

An update was received by the City Council at its last regular meeting.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

17. Order
(ID # [25-0649](#))
- By Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs coordinate with departments to assess which federal grants are likely to not be available in FY 2026 and discuss with this Council the potential impact on programs and services.

Director Hartke told the committee that in January, there was a temporary pause on grants and she noted that the situation is changing almost daily prompting staff to watch existing grants for any impacts and await additional information on anything that may affect the city. She noted that the city's Health and Human Services Department will be impacted by the CDC decision to end grants to states. Director Hartke stated that vendors are aware of the problems and that the status of formula grants is unclear. Her department is proactively encouraging staff to submit reimbursement requests in the hope that they will be paid. Staff will advise city departments of the daily news and will be talking with the city's budget team about potential reductions. The director also noted that some grants already applied for may not be available.

Councilor Burnley commented that he has seen some impacts resulting from some of the cuts and he asked if the Region 1 Head Start program would be shut down and if it would affect Somerville. Director Hartke responded by saying that she doesn't think it's been halted in Somerville but she will find out and report back. Councilor Burnley asked about funding for schools and Chair Wilson noted that no school funds were clawed back.

The city has submitted its applications for fire-fighting grants, e.g., SCBA (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus), however FEMA is reviewing all of its materials to ensure that they're in compliance with President Trump's Executive Orders. Director Hartke closed her remarks by pointing out that the state may not be able to provide funds to cities and towns due to federal cuts.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2025-04-08 COA Memo (with 25-0531)
- Finance - 2025-04-08 Founders Data (with 25-0456)
- Finance - 2025-04-08 OSPCD Presentation (with 25-0601)
- Finance - 2025-04-08 Parks and Rec Memo (with 25-0493)
- Finance - 2025-04-08 Parks and Rec Memo (with 25-0414)
- Finance - 2025-04-08 Elected Official CoLA Memo (with 25-0375)
- Finance - 2025-04-08 Amending Ch. 2 Art. VI Div. 3 Elected Official Cost of Living Adjustment (with 25-0375)