



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 30, 2025

6:00 PM

Committee of the Whole

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 8:58 pm on a roll call vote of 9 in favor (Councilors Sait, Ewen-Campen, Scott, Mbah, Burnley, Jr., Clingan, Strezo, Pineda Neufeld, Wilson), 0 opposed, and 2 absent (Councilors McLaughlin and Davis).

The Council recessed at 6:41pm and reconvened at 7:00 pm on a roll call vote of 9 present (Councilors Sait, Ewen-Campen, Scott, Mbah, Burnley, Jr., Clingan, Strezo, Pineda Neufeld, Wilson), 0 opposed, and 2 absent (Councilors McLaughlin and Davis).

Others present: Anne Gill - Director of Human Resources, Mike Mastrobuoni - Budget Director, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

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., City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, Lance L. Davis, Ben Ewen-Campen, Matthew McLaughlin, Judy Pineda Neufeld, Naima Sait and Kristen Strezo

1. Public Hearing

1.1. Order (ID # [25-0147](#))

By Councilor Wilson

That this City Council hold a public hearing in the Committee on Finance on the community's Fiscal Year 2026 budget priorities.

Chair Wilson opened the public hearing at 6:02 pm. 21 residents spoke at tonight's public hearing listing numerous budget priorities and concerns for fiscal year (FY)26. Among them 8 people spoke in support of funding for an alternative emergency response program, specifically outside of the police department. Residents spoke in support of having it staffed by peer responders or licensed mental health clinicians. 7 residents spoke in support of automated traffic enforcement. 8 residents, with many members of youth speaking, asked for budget priorities to allocate funding to teens space. Focusing specifically on repairs needed at the Youth Empowerment building. Residents spoke to the many ailments the building is facing including but not limited to not meeting accessibility standards, safety hazards in the ceiling, electric outlets, flooring, and unsafe fire exits. 4 residents spoke in support of more affordable housing. Additional comments highlighted the desire for funding dedicated to the immigrant community and to aid residents who are experiencing displacement. 4 residents spoke in

favor of funding capital improvements throughout the city. Putting an emphasis on investing in real estate that already exists in and considering what Somerville owns and does not need. One resident spoke to adding a meal plan program at the cost of \$18,000 to the budget priorities. Multiple residents spoke to adding budget priorities for vulnerable populations through social services, education, public and community activation space, money into culture and recreation programming, and funding more racial and social justice programming available to constituents. Two residents spoke to the city to part ways with businesses that fund Gaza and would not like their budget to go towards supporting those businesses. Chair Wilson closed the hearing at 6:41pm.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

2. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [25-0115](#))

Conveying an update on the Non-Union Employee Classification and Compensation Study.

Director of Human Resources Anne Gill presented the Non-Union Compensation Study information and updates via the PowerPoint entitled *Finance - 2025-01-30 Non-Union Classification and Compensation Study slide deck for FinCom 1.30.25 (with 25-0115)*. She opened her presentation by thanking the administration, staff, and the Mayor for the support and willingness to work with HR in completing this study and commended the work of the outside council that was hired. Budget Director Mike Mastrobuoni took over part way through the presentation to present the study results for the elected officials including the City Council, School Committee, and Mayor compensation.

Throughout the questioning done by members of the Council in response to this compensation presentation, much of the substantive conversation by Councilors Ewen-Campen, Wilson, Scott, Burnley, Jr., Sait, and Mbah spoke to lack of change in elected officials' salary. Councilor Wilson pointed out that full compensation of elected officials, meaning the Mayor, City Council, and School Committee has not been done since 2016. Councilors highlighted the effective pay cut they are experiencing by not receiving a cost of adjustment living. Many Councilors went on to share their dissatisfaction in not being asked to collaborate or provide input on their own hours spent doing work and urged the Budget Director to share the study documents in a future meeting. Additionally, many comments were made about the dis service being done to the School Committee members who do not receive a pay increase in this proposed study and disagree with the proposed amount for pay. Among this discussion, Councilor Burnley spent considerable time highlighting the current pay for Councilors is not enough to live off in Somerville and, along with Councilor Scott, inquired as to what definition was used for "campaigning" and "in official capacity"

when calculating the wages for elected officials.

Councilor Ewen-Campen opened the questions by asking what was presented by a member of the Licensing Commission in advance of this meeting about why the Licensing Commission was not included in Tier 3 in the new Boards and Commission pay structure. Director Mastrobuoni responded that the major changes resulted in bodies who had significant funds to allocate within the city. In this evaluation the Licensing Commission had 2 points for advisory and enforcement but not a point for the allocation of funds like others in Tier 3. Councilor Ewen-Campen followed up asking a clarifying question about Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals and what budgetary responsibilities they have, Director Mastrobuoni shared throughout the compensation study the goal was not to remove money and those bodies are already currently being paid the amount in Tier 3. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked when the last time Boards and Commissions received increases and if getting information on how responsibilities have changed is accessible, Director Mastrobuoni shared they are all stipends that were created in an ad hoc manner and no thorough review has been done of them at one time.

Councilor Clingan went on to ask for an example of what types of jobs, and how many jobs will fall into the increase of salaries now starting at \$65,000. Director Gill shared a small list of titles falling into that category including family support workers, kitchen managers, and records clerks who are all entry level professionals with some education requirements. Director Gill also added HR is working on adding minimum requirements to job descriptions online to open opportunities to women and minorities in Band 1 and 2. Councilor Clingan also asked what the lowest paid Union member salary is at, Director Mastrobuoni stated the full contract will be shared at the February 13th City Council meeting and a true entry level position are in the range of \$50,000.

Councilor Wilson asked the thinking behind flipping the grade scale and correlation to pay grade. Director Gill responded it will be consistent with the grading in the Union, and it makes more sense in a numerical factor.

Councilor Wilson asked how the city is setting aside stabilization funds to ensure funding for these salary adjustments occurring retroactively. Director Mastrobuoni shared that the city had put 7 million in salary contingency and the City set themselves up to be able to pay. He further shared this compensation work and settling contracts is, and continues to be, a priority in the Mayor's budget. Later on, Councilor Scott asked for confirmation around SMEA B Union members receiving retroactive pay, to which Director Mastrobuoni confirmed the pay will go back to the beginning of their contract in 2023.

There was additional substantive conversation sparked by Councilor

Clingan's question as to why Cambridge is not considered a comparable community in terms of this compensation study. Councilor Scott went on to point out on the referenced document entitled, *Finance - 2025-01-30 NonUnion Employees Compensation Memo 1.28.25 (with 25-0115)*, that Cambridge is listed as a comparable municipality for union workers. In response to Councilor Clingan Director Mastrobuoni stated the elected officials have a different form of government and their City Councilors are full time. Additionally, in terms of staff and the budget Cambridge is not comparable to the resources available in Somerville to match Cambridge salaries.

Councilor Scott went on to ask why Individual Contributor 1 and 2 are not in union, Director Gill shared these are set by ordinance and they are professional entry level positions. Individual Contributors have a lot of responsibility but does not require bachelor's degree, they are highly skilled with prior experience and live in the community.

Councilor Wilson closed the questioning for the evening highlighting the good work done by the members involved with the compensation study and reminded the Councilors and the public this will also come before the full Council again during their February 13th meeting.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2025-01-30 MCAB Approval Memo Signed 1.30.2025 (with 25-0115)
- Finance - 2025-01-30 Elected Officials Compensation Memo 1.28.25 (with 25-0115)
- Finance - 2025-01-30 NonUnion Employees Compensation Memo 1.28.25 (with 25-0115)
- Finance - 2025-01-30 Board & Commissions Compensation Memo 1.28.25 (with 25-0115)
- Finance - 2025-01-30 Non-Union Classification and Compensation Study slide deck for FinCom 1.30.25 (with 25-0115)