



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

06:00 PM

Special Meeting, Joint Meeting with School Committee

NOTICE: This is NOT the official version of the City Council's minutes. While reasonable efforts have been made to assure the accuracy of the data provided, do not rely on this information without first checking with the City Clerk.

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM by Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis.
The City Council entered Recess at 6:05 PM and returned at 6:06 PM with 8 members present (Ewen-Campen, Scott, Clingan, Strezo, Wheeler, Hardt, Mbah, Davis), 3 absent (Link, Sait, McLaughlin).

1. OPENING CEREMONIES

Councilor Link arrived at 6:08 PM.
Councilor Sait arrived at 6:11 PM.
Councilor McLaughlin arrived at 6:45 PM.

Present: Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen
Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott
Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan
City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo
Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait
City Councilor At Large Ben Wheeler
Ward Seven City Councilor Emily Hardt
Ward One City Councilor Matthew McLaughlin
Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis
Remote: City Councilor At Large Jon Link
City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah

- 1.1. Roll Call Call of the Roll.
(ID # [26-0643](#))

RESULT: PLACED ON FILE

2. CITATIONS

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

4. ORDERS, ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND MOTIONS OF MEMBERS

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

6. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

7. COMMUNICATIONS OF THE MAYOR**8. COMMUNICATIONS OF CITY OFFICERS**

- 8.1. Officer's Communication (ID # [26-0624](#)) Finance Director, pursuant to Section 2-47 of the Code of Ordinances and Section 6-3 of the City Charter, reviewing the financial condition of the City, with revenue and expenditure forecasts, prior to the commencement of the FY2027 budget process.

Finance Director Ed Bean presented the city's financial picture and noted that, at this time, the figures presented are only estimates which will most likely change over the coming months.

Somerville enters fiscal year (FY) 27 with continued fiscal pressure driven by slow state aid growth, rising personnel costs, and a moderating revenue environment. Although the City's General Fund budget has expanded significantly over the past decade - growing 80% since FY16 and outpacing the consumer price index (CPI), structural challenges persist, particularly in state support and key economic sectors.

In FY26, state aid remains below FY02 levels in real dollars, and the life science market - a major driver of recent new growth - has declined 20% year-over-year. Midyear spending is generally on track, though a \$3.5 million snow removal deficit and a nearly \$300,000 unemployment compensation deficit will require one-time resources to close.

For FY27, revenues are projected at \$392.7 million, an increase of \$12.7 million, with up to \$12 million in potential new property tax revenue.

However, new growth is expected to slow, and the City faces a \$4.5 million level-service gap. Major cost centers continue to dominate the budget: schools (30%), employee wages (53%), health insurance (9.7%), and pension obligations (4.8%), with an unfunded pension liability of \$114.6 million scheduled for full funding by 2033.

The FY27 budget will largely maintain level services with limited targeted investments. Organizational reforms may realign departments, and the city will pursue additional revenue through fees, fines, and other measures.

Long-term fiscal stability remains a priority and will require cautious use of one-time funds and disciplined management of vacancies and expenditures.

Councilor Strezo asked about the snow removal that occurred this year and how much the city is spending in outside contractors rather than in house employees. Director Bean stated these questions would be better aligned to the Department of Public Works Commissioner during budget hearings but that this year's snowfall would not have been removed without the assistance of contractors and outside vendors. Mayor Wilson reminded the Council that there are no employees specifically designated for snow removal. The department uses current staff to the extent that they have the necessary licenses to operate equipment and then must use contractors to fill the gaps. It would not make sense to have employees just for snow.

Members of the School Committee expressed concern over potential cuts to

the school's budget with many members speaking of the need to keep and advance critical service learnings and personnel. Director Bean shared that city and the schools staff meet regularly and are working hard to keep the essential services and maintain the gains from previous years. This includes taking a deeper look at discretionary spending in the budget, which remains a work in progress for the next six weeks until it is presented. The Mayor also noted that if the revenue is higher than expected, any cuts made to the school budget will be among the first evaluated for restoration. Councilor Scott emphasized that the cuts proposed to Ordinary Maintenance (OM) lines will not get the city where it needs to be to keep level service. They spoke to the need to evaluate the deficit in the budget by re-evaluating the positions in the city, the vacant positions in the city, and contracting services. Mayor Wilson spoke to the current restructuring that is being led by the Chief Administrative Officer, which aims to address just that and create a leaner team on the city side while still being able to deliver services to residents. In response to additional questions from Councilor Scott, Mayor Wilson clarified that contingency cuts were asked of city departments to total 3% and 5% of their OM lines. The administration also asked the school administration to propose several versions of cuts. Councilor Hardt asked what other possible uses exist for the vacant life science buildings in the city, as they are a large part of the declining growth. Mayor Wilson shared that Economic Development is working to make Somerville an enticing destination for life science companies. The buildings are not built to easily flip into other use types; current efforts are to maintain them as life science buildings.

RESULT: **PLACED ON FILE**

AYE: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Strezo, Ward Five City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, and Ward Six City Councilor Davis

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

9. NEW BUSINESS

10. SUPPLEMENTAL ITEMS

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was Adjourned at 8:00 PM on a roll call vote of 10 in favor (Ewen-Campen, Link, Scott, Clingan, Strezo, Sait, Wheeler, Hardt, McLaughlin, Davis), 0 opposed, 1 absent (Mbah).