



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 24, 2026

6:00 PM

Committee of the Whole

This meeting was held in-person and virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:05 pm by Chair Wheeler and adjourned at 7:32 pm with a roll call vote of 10 in favor (Councilors Ewen-Campen, Link, Clingan, Strezo, Sait, Davis, Hardt, McLaughlin, Scott and Wheeler), none opposed, and one absent (Councilor Mbah).

Councilor Mbah arrived at 6:17 pm.

Also present: Alan Inacio - Director of Finance and Administration, Jerome Thomas - Director of Veterans' Services, Edward Bean - Director of Finance, Robert Berretta - Somerville Public Schools Chief Financial Officer and Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

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

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [26-0375](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of March 10, 2026.

RESULT:	<u>ACCEPTED</u>
AYE:	City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Clingan, Sait, Davis and McLaughlin
ABSENT:	City Councilor At Large Strezo

Grant and Gift Acceptances

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0325](#)) Requesting approval to establish a Grant Match Account with a \$15,000 transfer from the Department of Veterans' Services Grounds Maintenance Account to the Department of Veterans' Services Special Items Account for the Massachusetts General Court and the State Historical Records Advisory Board Grant match requirement.

Jerome Thomas, Director of Veterans' Services introduced this item.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Clingan, Sait, Davis and McLaughlin

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo

Appropriations

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0202](#)) Requesting approval to appropriate \$75,000 from the Bike Share Stabilization Fund for installation and startup costs of a Blue Bike station at the 16-20 Medford Street development site.

Alan Inacio, Director of Finance and Administration, discussed the bike station, noting that funding was donated by a developer and will cover both installation and future repairs.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Clingan, Sait, Davis and McLaughlin

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0163](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$430,965 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Special Education Reserve Fund.

Councilors Davis and Clingan noted that they were recused from the discussion.

Edward Bean, Director of Finance, noted that the City Council and School Committee had approved the creation of a Special Education Reserve Fund. The fund includes \$430,965 in special education funding that was delayed by the Department of Revenue, originally intended for FY2024 but received in FY2025.

Robert Berretta, Chief Financial Officer of Somerville Public Schools, highlighted the strong partnership between the City and the schools. In response to a question from Councilor Link on how similar delays could be prevented, he explained that while budgeting is done carefully, recent economic volatility made it difficult to anticipate. He added that the purpose of the reserve fund is to help absorb unexpected costs that may arise throughout the school year.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Sait and McLaughlin

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo

RECUSED: Clingan and Davis

Community Preservation Act Appropriations

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0300](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$100,766 from the Community Preservation Act Fund Historic Preservation Reserve to the Somerville Museum to conserve artifacts in its collection.

This item was discussed with item #26-0323.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Clingan, Sait, Davis and McLaughlin

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo

6. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0299](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$200,000 from the Community Preservation Act Fund Open Space Reserve to the Open Space Land Acquisition Fund.

This item was discussed with item #26-0323.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Clingan, Sait, Davis and McLaughlin

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0298](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,167,395 from the Community Preservation Act Fund Community Housing Reserve to the Affordable Housing Trust.

This item was discussed with item #26-0323.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Clingan, Sait, Davis and McLaughlin

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0297](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$399,255 from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Undesignated Fund Balance to the CPA Fund Community Housing Reserve.

This item was discussed with item #26-0323.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Clingan, Sait, Davis and McLaughlin

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Strezo

9. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0323](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$50,000 from the Community Preservation Act Budgeted Reserve to the Housing Authority for improvements to the open space at the Mystic River/View developments.
- Alan Inacio Director of Finance and Administration noted that Mystic View Open Space Improvements and the Somerville Museum are projects from this year's funding round. He explained that following the tax recap, they finalize all tax receipts from the prior fiscal year. Now that the final numbers are in, it requires a mid-year adjustment, and approval is requested to transfer funds to the housing trust.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Link, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Wheeler, Ewen-Campen, Mbah, Clingan, Sait, Davis and McLaughlin
- ABSENT:** City Councilor At Large Strezo

Communications

10. Communication (ID # [26-0357](#)) By Councilor Clingan
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2027.
- This item was discussed with item #26-0360.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
11. Communication (ID # [26-0345](#)) By Councilor Sait
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2027.
- This item was discussed with item #26-0360.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
12. Communication (ID # [26-0344](#)) By Councilor Ewen-Campen
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2027.
- This item was discussed with item #26-0360.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

-
- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 13. | Communication
(ID # 26-0355) | <p>By Councilor Strezio
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2027.</p> <p>This item was discussed with item #26-0360.</p> <p>RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u></p> |
| 14. | Communication
(ID # 26-0335) | <p>By Councilor Mbah
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2027.</p> <p>This item was discussed with item #26-0360.</p> <p>RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u></p> |
| 15. | Communication
(ID # 26-0351) | <p>By Councilor Davis
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2027.</p> <p>This item was discussed with item #26-0360.</p> <p>RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u></p> |
| 16. | Communication
(ID # 26-0349) | <p>By Councilor Link
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2027.</p> <p>This item was discussed with item #26-0360.</p> <p>RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u></p> |
| 17. | Communication
(ID # 26-0371) | <p>By Councilor Hardt
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2027.</p> <p>This item was discussed with item #26-0360.</p> <p>RESULT: <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u></p> |
| 18. | Communication
(ID # 26-0360) | <p>By Councilor Wheeler
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2027.</p> <p>Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that this will be a challenging year, as national economic policies are straining city budgets across the country. He highlighted immigrant rights programs as a high priority and called attention to activating Gilman Square, including a city-owned lot that has been sitting vacant.</p> <p>Councilor Link highlighted a \$5.9 million budget shortfall and stressed the importance of ensuring core services remain intact for residents. He emphasized the housing crisis, advocating for stronger eviction protections, permanent affordable housing, and safe routes for people to walk and bike</p> |
-

around the City. Councilor Link also called for protecting immigrant communities through language access, maintaining climate commitments, and ensuring arts and culture remain funded. Lastly, he encouraged reviewing contracts and consultants to identify potential savings and prioritize local employment opportunities.

Councilor Mbah stressed that immigrant services should be prioritized, including increased funding for legal services, housing, and social supports. He called for protecting the rights of immigrant communities, maintaining quality schools, public safety, and public health, and preserving infrastructure. Councilor Mbah suggested revisiting Winter Hill funding decisions and emphasized housing stability, including direct assistance for those facing displacement. He also recommended reassessing pandemic-era programs now that ARPA funding is phasing out.

Councilor Clingan expressed appreciation for early budget discussions, hoping it would signal to the administration the council's priorities. He highlighted the city's street paving program, which currently addresses 1% of streets annually based on condition and usage, and proposed increasing this to 2% per year to improve quality of life and reduce residents' repair costs.

Councilor Strezo noted that a formal budget has not yet been presented and emphasized that the Mayor's office has authority to modify the budget and create new departments. She called for prioritizing community spaces, including keeping the Founders Rink open and funding a girls' intramural hockey program. She also supported sustaining the Office of Housing Stability and Office of Immigrant Affairs, implementing the Massachusetts Antisemitism Commission suggestions, providing low-cost work pods for City Hall employees to meet with constituents, and continuing initiatives like street murals, traffic calming measures, menstrual product availability in city buildings, and ongoing rodent control. She also mentioned that the Council on Aging Board requested \$300 for t-shirts.

Councilor Sait highlighted the importance of funding for the Office of Immigrant Affairs, including translation services, legal aid, and "Know Your Rights" training. She proposed improvements to the Community Path, funding for Safe Streets, expanded out-of-school programming, and conducting a study and 10-year decarbonization plan for schools. Councilor Sait also called for funding to repair the Armory roof, development of a swing space plan for Somerville Public Schools, and activate the high school as a youth and family center. She also emphasized that if direct funding is unavailable, partnerships with community organizations could fill the gap.

Councilor Hardt highlighted the need to preserve core services, noting that Somerville maintains a AAA bond rating despite financial constraints. She emphasized investments in housing support and also stressed that immigrant

services and language access must remain a priority, noting that demand for interpretation services has quadrupled. Councilor Hardt also highlighted Greater Boston Legal Services' role in providing local legal support, advocating for an additional \$100,000 to hire a paralegal dedicated to Somerville. She prioritized Somerville children and youth, including schools, vocational programming, and school-based food programs. She also highlighted the senior taxi program in Ward 7.

Councilor Davis emphasized the importance of communicating council priorities to the mayoral administration. He highlighted affordable and supportive housing as key priorities, the Davis Square neighborhood plan, and the value of increasing funding for community partners to help maintain scalable services that the city cannot provide directly.

Councilor McLaughlin called for prioritizing an air filtration pilot program for homes near Highway 93 and additional \$100,000 in funding for immigration and legal aid programs, which are currently at capacity. He emphasized prioritizing the East Somerville Library and purchasing a municipal plow for sidewalks to assist seniors and disabled residents at low or no cost.

Councilor Scott observed broad agreement among councilors on priorities such as housing, immigrant services, and expanded out-of-school programs. He also highlighted the need for enforcement mechanisms for the Vacant Property Ordinance and for the Rental Registry Program to ensure tenants receive notifications. Councilor Scott also supported expanding the immigrant legal services fund, investing in non-police alternative emergency responses, and maintaining funding for arts, libraries, and the Council on Aging. Lastly, he noted that outsourcing and middle management expansion have historically been expensive and encouraged a focus on more efficient, service-driven structures.

Chair Wheeler discussed the importance of the Office of Housing Stability's programs, including the Flex and Municipal Voucher programs, recommending converting provisional funding into permanent, recurring funding to strengthen housing security. He highlighted the impact of small investments in permanent supportive housing, afterschool programming, and alternative public safety measures. He also supported smart traffic lights to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety, additional staff such as a senior liaison and homeless services coordinator, and ongoing funding for immigration legal representation. He emphasized evaluating police overtime carefully, noting that while it is sometimes necessary, proper staffing and scheduling can stretch resources more effectively. He also mentioned that within City departments, middle management has expanded significantly in recent years, which can reduce efficiency, and suggested reviewing positions and roles to ensure staff resources are focused on service delivery rather than unnecessary layers of supervision.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK
COMPLETED**

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2026-03-24 Memo (with 26-0202)