



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

October 15, 2019
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
William A. White Jr.	Chair	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	Vice Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Absent	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	

The meeting was held in the Committee Room and was called to order by Chairman White at 6:04pm and adjourned at 8:19pm.

Councilor McLaughlin was unable to attend due to a personal matter.

Others present: Mark Niedergang - Ward 5 City Councilor; Ed Bean - Finance; Rich Raiche - I&AM; Suzanne Rinfret - Traffic & Parking; Kristen Stelljes - SomerStat; Brad Rawson - OSPCD; Annie Connor - Intergovernmental Affairs; Denise Taylor - Communications; Gregory Jenkins - Arts Council; Oliver Sellers-Garcia - OSE; Hannah Pappenheim - Law

Approval of the September 24, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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208518: Requesting approval to increase selected parking fines.

Ms. Rinfret shared that most of the fines being updated are related to public safety, and will be in line with other fines following the increase. There are not many tickets written for any of these, but they pose greater issues due to public safety. Chairman White asked how these fines compare to other communities and they will be very similar, with Boston's fines still being higher. Councilor Rossetti noted that the fine for double parking should be higher, because it causes such a traffic issue. A double parking fine is more difficult to enforce, and there are more drop-off areas to eliminate some of the dangers from double parking. Councilor Ballantyne noted that often trucks don't have any place to unload, and we don't want to adversely affect small businesses. Councilor Rossetti asked when the fines were last increased and the fine for parking within 2' of a driveway was increased 2-3 years ago, and none of the other fines have been increased in at least the past 9 years of Ms. Rinfret's tenure with the City.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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208705: Requesting approval of an amendment to Ordinance 2-273 - Revolving Funds, to establish a Nibble Kitchen Revolving Fund.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about the progress and Mr. Jenkins shared that it is open Thursday through Sunday and the hope is that in another 3-4 weeks that will be extended.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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208706: Requesting the approval of a \$125,000 expenditure limitation for the Nibble Kitchen Revolving Fund for FY2020.

See item 208705.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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208857: Requesting the supplemental appropriation of \$30,719 to the Communications and Community Engagement Salary and Wages Temporary Account to hire a temporary US Census 2020 Complete Count Coordinator.

Councilor Rossetti recused herself from discussion of and voting on this item.

Ms. Taylor shared that there are a number of concerns about properly counting the elderly and disabled and addressing the digital divide, as this is the first year that the primary way to respond is online. Somerville has a number of districts that are considered among the hardest to count. An incomplete count affects both representation in Congress and funding for the next ten years. Councilor Ballantyne asked how the physical work would take place, and Ms. Taylor noted that part of the position would be to identify the best possible resources, including outreach, tablets, and potentially other options.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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208938: Requesting acceptance of a \$50,000 grant with no new match required, from the Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department for the purchase of 2 all-terrain vehicles.

Chief Fallon was unable to attend, so this will be addressed at a future meeting.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208964: That the Administration invite representatives from Weston & Sampson and relevant outside counsel to appear before this Council's Finance Committee to discuss all issues pertaining to the remediation and design of Conway Park.

Councilor Rossetti asked if anything is preventing the City from digging further in order to allow for use of natural grass rather than artificial turf. Mr. Rawson clarified that the regulations require 36" of clean soil to support natural grass. George Maslas, Weston & Sampson, doesn't think that the additional surface works with the grade of the area, and additional retaining walls would be needed, which would further increase the cost of remediation.

The Committee entered into executive session to discuss negotiations and legal matters. No votes were taken in executive session.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

209009: Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$6,500,000 in a bond for annual water system improvements.

Mr. Raiche had previously highlighted that the water system was in need of improvement and the funding rate should be increased. The goal is that the current value of \$6.5M would be escalated by 4% each year to keep up with the inflation of construction costs. These increases were built into the annual projections in the rate increase proposal that was previously approved by the City Council.

Councilor Ballantyne asked for clarification about the total CIP and Water & Sewer CIP requests and the difference of approximately \$50M from previous CIPs provided. Mr. Bean noted that the March 2019 Water & Sewer plan and the June 2019 General Fund plan are current and most of the changes were detailed in the presentations from March and April about sewer needs and are also due largely to escalations and historic under-investment. For the General Fund, most of the increases are due to inflation.

RESULT:

APPROVED

209010: Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$3,730,000 in a bond for streets and sidewalk reconstruction.

The central portion of the City, including private ways, which have been added for the first time, were re-surveyed this year for the pavement condition index (PCI). There has previously been no way to address the requests to pave private ways, and this will enable the City to fairly assess the comparative need. About half of the City's total miles are so poor that they require full construction. All of Inner Belt and portions of Assembly are private ways, as well as many small streets. Prioritization is based not only on condition but also on traffic.

This year, there is also a separate prioritization for sidewalk repairs, which incorporates pedestrian destinations and origin points. The changes for this year include having a separate sidewalk contract, which may allow for more competitive bidding, as the crews and equipment needed are different from street paving, with which the repairs have historically been combined.

The program has been funded since FY 2014 based on an assumed dollar value plus inflation. The \$6.88M in the CIP includes \$1.95M carried over as well as \$1.2M from the state through Chapter 90. Thus, the bond appropriation for this fiscal year is \$3.73M.

RESULT:

APPROVED

209011: Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$3,380,000 in a bond for the Flint Street Sewer Replacement Project.

Mr. Raiche noted that this street has been a problem for the Sewer Department for several years. It has collapsed twice in the past three years, requiring emergency repairs. The preliminary design would replace the cross-country sewer by re-routing to the right of way. Rehabilitation is not viable due to the location. Final design would begin this fiscal year, with construction to be primarily in FY 2021-2022. Councilor Rossetti clarified that this bond request is not listed on the CIP for FY2020, and Mr. Raiche noted that the spend schedule on the CIP informs the debt service, but for multi-year projects, the full amount is requested up front. Mr. Bean added that this is an authorization, the actual borrowing will take place as needed. Councilor Ballantyne confirmed that the City is still in the same range with what was

previously proposed after the updated rates were approved. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked if any progress has been made with the residential exemption, and discussions are underway but progress is slow.

RESULT:

APPROVED

209012: Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$2,740,000 in a bond for sewer replacement from Willow Avenue to Grove Street.

Mr. Raiche shared that this is a cross-country sewer that runs along the Community Path. He clarified that cross-country in this context indicates that the pipe is not aligned under a street (a right of way), but rather goes through several different properties, in this case, several backyards abutting the Community Path. This has also required several emergency repairs and the pipe is collapsed in several locations. The bids to rehabilitate this were astronomically high, and with that route, the pipe would remain on private property. The replacement will help solve several flooding problems. The goal is for design to begin immediately and construction to start late next year.

RESULT:

APPROVED

209013: Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$1,660,000 in a bond for a Sewer System Evaluation Study and Infiltration/Inflow Assessment.

A comprehensive effort to inspect the system began last year, with only 4% of the system able to be inspected thus far. An intensive program for inspection will help the City avoid more expensive emergency repairs and will help address issues and design changes that need to be made. This will be a recurring expense for several years.

RESULT:

APPROVED

209043: Conveying an Administrative Order issued by the US Environmental Protection Agency with respect to the City's combined sewer and drainage system.

The results of a February audit by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) included an administrative order (AO), which the City has responded to a draft of. The City has agreed to address three primary areas, which include Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE), Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG), and Capacity, Management, Operation and Maintenance (CMOM). IDDE was already included in the CIP and FOG had already been identified by Inspectional Services as a goal to address. As long as the City reaches the due dates that were agreed upon with the EPA, the AO ends. If the City fails to achieve this, the EPA progresses to an administrative consent order (ACO) and the City loses decision making power and may incur significant additional costs. The hydraulic models and alternatives analysis to reduce both flooding and CSOs is being studied currently. The MWRA, Cambridge, and Somerville are also working jointly on a CSO reduction plan. Chairman White confirmed that there will be expenses to reduce the extent to which the systems are combined. There are placeholder projects included in the CIP. He clarified as well that there will be a more complete schedule for anticipated costs forthcoming, to be considered when the rates are set this year. Mr. Raiche noted that this may not be a fully formed plan until the FY 2021 rates are set.

Councilor Rossetti asked what the plan was for informing property owners. This will be part of the IDDE investigation, which will identify properties with illicit connections and work to remedy them. The investigation requires a lot of sampling and dye testing and some luck. The MS4 permit was first issued in

2003, and very little was done since then, though the Engineering Department had identified and allocated funding for these items in recent years.

Mr. Raiche clarified that about 80-90% of the City is served by a combined sewer, and any flow in excess of the MWRA's capacity to accept it, overflows to Alewife Brook or the Mystic River. The past year saw 13 overflows, which is a significant source of contamination. Only about 10% of the City has separate stormwater, which is governed by the MS4, though these properties may have incorrect connections, leading to contamination.

The AO outlines several different dates, which Mr. Raiche believes are attainable. Councilor Ballantyne noted that the state needs to be part of the solution and should bear some of the financial responsibility for pipes that are on state-owned land. Chairman White clarified that the ordinances will need to be approved by the end of the current fiscal year.

RESULT:

APPROVED

Handouts:

- Debt Data (with 209009, 209010, 209011, 209012, 209013)
- FinCom CIP Bond Reqs 2019Oct15 v1 (with 209009, 209010, 209011, 209012, 209013)