



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

6:30 PM

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

This meeting was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:30 pm and adjourned at 9:20 pm. A recess was taken from 7:34 pm to 7:48 pm.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo – Mayor’s Office, Brendan Salisbury – City Clerk’s Office, William Trudell, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Jake Wilson, Vice Chair Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Charlotte Kelly, Jesse Clingan, Judy Pineda Neufeld, Willie Burnley Jr., Lance L. Davis, Ben Ewen-Campen, Beatriz Gomez Mouakad, Matthew McLaughlin and Kristen Strezo

Chair Wilson allowed each councilor to speak for three minutes in favor of budget priorities outlined in their memos or in other councilors' memos (attached to the agenda items). Then, the Committee discussed any topic that garnered vocal support from at least eight councilors with the goal of finding common ground among the priorities. The Committee passed five resolutions relating to the following topics:

Housing:

- Sponsor: Councilor McLaughlin
- That the City Council reaffirm its commitment to affordable housing, up to and/or including affordable housing priorities laid out in budget priority memos submitted by city councilors.

Out-of-School Programs:

- Sponsor: Councilor Burnley
- That the City Council support increased funding for out-of-school programs, including, but not limited to, out-of-school programs laid out in budget priority memos submitted by city councilors.

Rodent Control:

- Sponsor: Councilor McLaughlin
- That the City Council support any and all rodent mitigation efforts listed in budget priority memos submitted by city councilors.

Youth Outreach:

- Sponsor: Councilor Clingan
- That the City Council support the acquisition of a van and two staff members for youth outreach in the community, meeting youth where they are at and providing support services.

Alternative Emergency Response:

- Sponsor: Councilor Davis
- That the FY 2024 budget include increased funding for new social workers and other mental health professionals to expand capacity for an alternative response to emergency calls involving mental health related, substance use, or other issues.

A point of repeated discussion at the meeting was whether to prioritize immediate, achievable steps or long-term solutions, and the best method for each:

- Housing was divided into three subcategories: affordable housing, housing stability, and emergency housing. Multiple councilors spoke in favor of a municipal voucher program and increasing OHS staff. Multiple councilors also called for the City Council to send a strong message to the Administration that there is a housing crisis.
- Out-of-school initiatives fell into the categories of before and after school care, teen centers, and summer programs.
- Many rodent mitigation strategies were mentioned; Councilor Kelly's rodent memo was highlighted for its attention to detail, but two other ideas also gained recognition, such as Chair Wilson's call for a fund to reimburse property owners for damage, and Councilor Scott's suggestion to replace open trash bins with "BigBelly" style compactors.
- Councilor Clingan talked about his vision for a van-based youth outreach program that would be funded through HHS and give children and teens an approachable, relatable support option.

- Councilors differed in approaches for alternative emergency response. The difference between alternative response and co-response was discussed more than once, and the panelist presentations from the 02/27/23 Public Health and Public Safety Committee meeting were recommended for their educational value. The role of COHR was a keystone of the discussion.

Topics that were mentioned but did not receive vocal support from eight or more councilors include a fare-free bus pilot, additional funding for ISD staff, air filtration programs, staff to aid the City Council and its committees, language justice regarding staffing (e.g., a program coordinator), a community center, overdose prevention facilities and safe consumption sites, an art stabilization fund, staff for senior affairs, support for small businesses along the GLX, increased immigrant services such as legal and translation services, and a municipal infrastructure capacity and training program.

Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [23-0159](#))

Conveying updates to the FY 2023 City Council budget requests and requesting budget priorities for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0468](#))

By Councilor Wilson
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0474](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0371](#))

By Councilor Davis
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0502](#))

By Councilor Scott
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0451](#))

By Councilor Strezo
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0475](#)) By Councilor Clingan
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0453](#)) By Councilor Ewen-Campen
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0498](#)) By Councilor Burnley Jr.
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0467](#)) By Councilor Kelly
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communication
(ID # [23-0456](#)) By Councilor Pineda Neufeld
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED