



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, June 4, 2026

6:00 PM

Special Meeting

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.

1. OPENING CEREMONIES

Councilor Mbah arrived at 6:07 PM

Present: Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen
 City Councilor At Large Jon Link
 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
 City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah
 Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 PM by Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis. The City Council entered recess at 7:50 PM and returned at 8:05 PM.

- 1.1. Roll Call Call of the Roll.
(ID # [26-0976](#))

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

7.1. Mayor's Request
(ID # [26-0950](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$376,778,493 to fund the Fiscal Year 2027 General Fund Operating Budget.

Budget which is the product of a multi-month, community-driven process designed to deliver results, strengthen core services, and uphold Somerville’s values with action. While operating amid historic statewide fiscal pressures and slowing economic growth, the city successfully closed a \$5.4 million budget gap to present a balanced \$394 million budget, which represents a 3.7% year-over-year increase, that protects essential city services, historic school funding, and long-term community investments. To resolve the fiscal shortfall while preserving public services, the city utilized a strategic combination of structural adjustments, cost controls, and workforce restructuring, as follows:

Strategy Tool	Contribution	Action Taken
Workforce Restructuring	\$2.0M	Eliminated 16 vacant positions; conducted 13 layoffs as a last resort.
Operating Budget Reviews	\$1.7M	Cut citywide non-personnel operating budgets by ~5%; shifted select staff and expenses to grants and settlement funds.
Reserve Strategy	\$0.9M	Utilized \$14M in reserves to buy down debt and shift capital projects, creating recurring budget capacity.
Revenue Cost Recovery	\$750k	Increased revenues, raised select fees, and optimized permit timing.

The FY27 budget prioritizes education and infrastructure, with the largest categorical funding increases distributed as follows: 1) \$8.63 million for Somerville Public Schools, 2) \$2.68 million for Health Insurance & Fringe Benefits, 3) \$1.93 million for Public Works, 4) \$160,000 for Public Safety, and \$633,000 for all other categories.

The school funding boost represents the largest dollar increase in the history of Somerville Public Schools and includes these key educational initiatives:

- Personnel Support: 5 new special education teachers and 6 instructional coaches/interventionists.
- Operational Funding: A \$600,000 increase for substitute teacher coverage.
- Equity & Student Support: Expanded equity formula funding, continued free MBTA passes for grades 7-12, and the expansion of the Working on Womanhood program.
- Infrastructure: Significant city-funded school building upgrades.

The city is maintaining robust investments in core quality-of-life services, infrastructure maintenance, and operational modernizations, including:

- Public Infrastructure: Expanded road paving, sidewalk repairs, public tree care, and enhanced rodent control.
- Mobility & Safety: Target investments in street safety, overall public safety improvements, and the Fire Response "Green Wave" initiative.
- Digital & Service Overhauls: Structural upgrades to the city website and mobile app, an overhaul of business/homeowner permitting processes, and facilities maintenance tracked via SomerStat performance measurements.

The FY27 budget continues to back Somerville's social and equity infrastructure through targeting funding across municipal divisions:

- Emergency & Safety Re-Imagining: Continued funding for emergency co-response models and civilian oversight.
- Housing & Anti-Displacement: Dedicated resources for new affordable housing production, pipeline expansion for future housing projects, tenant rights protections, and legal supports for housing and immigrants.
- Civil & Language Access: Dedicated infrastructure support for the Language & Communications Access Office, Engagement & Neighborhood Services, and the ADA Coordinator.
- Equity & Belonging Infrastructure: Direct funding for the Equity & Belonging Division, Somerville Office of Immigrant Advancement (SOIA), Police Accountability Program Director, and the Public Safety for All Project Manager.

While slowing residential and commercial growth projections present structural headwinds for long-term planning, the city continues to push forward on its major foundational initiatives. In the area of Economic Development, the upcoming relocation of medical technology company TransMedics to Somerville is projected to bring 900 jobs to the city by 2032, anchoring future commercial growth. Additionally, with respect to Urban Planning and Climate Action, dedicated resources remain behind the delivery of the Davis Square Neighborhood Plan and the continued implementation of Climate Forward goals.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

7.2. Mayor's Request
(ID # [26-0953](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$794,782 to fund the Fiscal Year 2027 Kennedy School Pool Enterprise Fund budget.

Councilor Wheeler moved to refer items 7.2 through 7.7 to the Finance Committee.

RESULT: REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION

FOLLOWUP: Finance Committee

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- 7.3. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0954](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$237,500 to fund the Fiscal Year 2027 Dilboy Fields Enterprise Fund Budget.
- Councilor Wheeler moved to refer items 7.2 through 7.7 to the Finance Committee.
- RESULT:** **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
- FOLLOWUP:** Finance Committee
- 7.4. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0970](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$238,791 from the Kennedy School Pool Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings to support the Fiscal Year 2027 Kennedy School Pool Enterprise Fund Budget.
- Councilor Wheeler moved to refer items 7.2 through 7.7 to the Finance Committee.
- RESULT:** **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
- FOLLOWUP:** Finance Committee
- 7.5. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0969](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$86,200 from the Dilboy Fields Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings Account to subsidize the Fiscal Year 2027 Dilboy Fields Enterprise Fund Budget.
- Councilor Wheeler moved to refer items 7.2 through 7.7 to the Finance Committee.
- RESULT:** **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
- FOLLOWUP:** Finance Committee
- 7.6. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0968](#)) Requesting the appropriation or reserve of \$8,367,344 in estimated Fiscal Year 2027 Community Preservation Act (CPA) revenue for CPA projects and expenses.
- Councilor Wheeler moved to refer items 7.2 through 7.7 to the Finance Committee.
- RESULT:** **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
- FOLLOWUP:** Finance Committee
- 7.7. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0948](#)) Requesting the approval of the expenditure limitations for departmental Revolving Funds for Fiscal Year 2027.
- Councilor Wheeler moved to refer items 7.2 through 7.7 to the Finance Committee.
- RESULT:** **REFERRED FOR RECOMMENDATION**
- FOLLOWUP:** Finance Committee
8. **COMMUNICATIONS OF CITY OFFICERS**
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- 8.1. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [26-0974](#))

Superintendent of Schools conveying the School Department budget for Fiscal Year 2027.

Somerville Public Schools (SPS) Superintendent Dr. Rubén Carmona and Dr. Robert Berretta, SPS Chief Financial Officer, presented the FY27 Superintendent's Budget. The presentation highlighted FY26 achievements, strategic priorities, major cost drivers, and detailed personnel and non-personnel budget changes. The District emphasized transparency and stewardship, noting that this year's materials "provide a higher level of transparency and detail than prior years."

The FY27 priorities are aligned with the district's strategic plan. The Somerville Public School Department remains focused on Academic Excellence, Equity & Access, Wellness & Joy, and Family & Community Engagement. The District remains committed to maintaining staff levels, advocating for state funding, and actively managing rising costs and inflation.

New contracts for SEU Units A, C, and E-which make up about 75% of staff-will lead to an average salary increase of 8.19%. For Special Education Investments, the number of special education teachers will increase from 71 to 76, out-of-district tuition is expected to rise from \$6.9M to \$7.9M, and transportation costs will grow by \$1.6M. Additionally, the budget for substitutes is expected to rise from \$715,000 to \$1.35M, driven primarily by the expanded paid parental leave policy. Finally, in-district transportation expenses will increase from \$1.45M to \$1.93M, which includes providing MBTA passes for all students in grades 7-12.

Councilor Davis and Councilor Clingan were recused from this item.

RESULT: PLACED ON FILE

- 8.2. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [26-0975](#))

School Committee Chair conveying the School Department budget for Fiscal Year 2027, approved by the School Committee Finance and Facilities Subcommittee on May 20, 2026.

Somerville Public Schools (SPS) Superintendent Dr. Rubén Carmona and Dr. Robert Berretta, SPS Chief Financial Officer reviewed the personnel and non-personnel allocations previously vetted by the Finance and Facilities subcommittee. The personnel budget, as voted by the subcommittee, increased from \$94.9M to \$104.9M and represents a net staffing change of +8.0 FTE. Budgeted additions include special education teachers, interventionists, ESL specialists, counselors, instructional coaches, and support staff. The FY27 non-personnel budget amounts to \$18.2 million, with \$3.5 million in out-of-district tuition moved to Circuit Breaker funding.

The School Committee voted to approve the total FY27 budget of \$123.1 million, which represents a 7.58% increase over the FY26 budget.

Councilor Davis and Councilor Clingan were recused from this item.

RESULT: PLACED ON FILE

9. NEW BUSINESS

10. SUPPLEMENTAL ITEMS

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was Adjourned at 9:20 PM.