



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 24, 2023

6:00 PM

Others present: Jill Lathan – DPW, Alan Inacio – OSPCD, Jeffrey Barbieri – DPW, Ashley Sepliotis – Council on Aging, Brian Postlewaite – Engineering, Michael Richards – DPW, Fred Berman – OSPCD, Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:01 PM by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 7:47 PM on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Kelly, Scott and Wilson), none against and none absent.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Charlotte Kelly, Jesse Clingan and Judy Pineda Neufeld

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [22-2076](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting on December 6, 2022.

RESULT: APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Gift Acceptances

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0043](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$1,050 gift with no new match required, from Tufts University Technology Support Center to the Council on Aging to reduce the cost of a luncheon for older adults.

Director Speliotis explained that these funds will greatly subsidize the cost of 2 upcoming lunches for seniors.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Appropriations

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0016](#)) Requesting approval to appropriate \$100,000 from the Encore Artist and Cultural Support Stabilization Fund to support Local Cultural Council grants to artists, organizations, and schools.

This full expenditure will allow the city’s LCC grant program to provide direct support to the city’s individual artists, organizations, and schools to conduct arts and cultural programming. This funding, along with a previously approved grant from the Mass Cultural Council, will provide approximately \$153,000 directly to the community.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

- 4. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2083](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$75,000 from the Bike Share Stabilization Fund for a Blue Bike Station at Boynton Yards at 101 South Street.

Director Inacio explained that this is the 2nd developer contribution received by the city and he hopes to have the site operational this year. The \$75,000 was contributed by the developer of 101 South Street. Councilor Kelly inquired about profits realized by Blue Bikes and Director Inacio replied that he doesn’t know if Blue Bikes does its accounting down to the station level, but revenue would be dependent on the number of transactions at each station. Councilor Kelly commented that when making contributions to companies such as Blue Bike, it’s important to make sure that they’re not running away with all of the profits.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Lease Agreements

- 5. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2041](#))

Requesting approval of the Alternative Transportation Corridor Lease Agreement with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA).

Chair Wilson reported that the final details of the lease agreement are still being worked out and should be ready in time for the next Finance meeting.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Contracts & Easements

- 6. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0035](#))

Requesting approval to extend a contract with the Community Action Agency of Somerville for an additional four months to 2/29/2023 for housing search and stabilization services.

Director Berman explained that both the contractor and city didn't realize the contract was expiring, so this extension will allow time for a new contract to be negotiated without interrupting ongoing services.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Bonding

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0049](#))

Requesting authorization to borrow \$4,545,827 in a bond, and to appropriate the same amount for streets and sidewalk reconstruction.

Director Postlewaite said that the recently completed 3-year pavement analysis indicates that the condition of the city's pavement is improving, with less than 50% of the streets categorized as being in 'poor' or 'less than poor' condition. The primary goal of the project is traffic calming and safety, and ADA accessibility. The complete streets component this year is West Washington Street and will include the completion of the Holland/College project. The scope of roadway paving has been reduced to one street, (Meacham Road), however the sidewalk component has been increased to improve the quality of ADA accessible curb ramps.

A strip of brick sidewalk will be reconstructed in Davis Square this year, extending its width beyond 5 feet. Because of the intricacies of the design and execution, adjustments may be made on a building by building basis. Council Pineda Neufeld asked if the Davis Square work will coincide with the re-signalization of Davis Square and Director Postlewaite confirmed that it would be coordinated. In other parts of the city, three raised crossing intersections will be built. Councilor Scott asked about speed humps and Director Postlewaite replied that their locations have not yet been decided upon. Director Postlewaite noted that the city is being aggressive this year and will be requesting more funding than in prior years. There are four funding streams being utilized, including excess funds from the Engineering Department's prior fiscal year budget. Director Richards explained that if there are remaining funds on a project, they would be applied to future projects.

Chair Wilson asked that a simple explanation of how streets are selected for upgrade be posted on the department's website. Functional classifications are used to order the streets for repair. Sidewalk data is also analyzed along with transit data, proximity to schools, etc. to develop a priority list for reconstruction. Council Pineda Neufeld inquired if the sidewalk reconstruction list could be shared and Director Postlewaite replied that the data is in the GIS database and could be shared on a general level by creating color coded maps, similar to what was in the presentation this

evening. Councilor Kelly asked about the timeline for FY-23 items and Director Postlewaite explained that the larger projects are labeled in the year that they're bid, but the actual time to completion could take 2 years. Councilor Kelly also asked how much has been typically bonded for these types of projects and Director Richards explained that the budget has increased by 4.5% to account for increased costs, but since 2021, that increase has risen to 10% per year. Councilor Clingan asked how much it would cost to upgrade 5% of the city's streets and Director Postlewaite postulated that it might be as high as \$3-4 million just to pave streets, however it would be difficult to secure contractors to do the work. Councilor Scott commented that Cambridge has been having some problems with the quality of concrete used for sidewalk repairs and he asked how Somerville would mitigate those issues should they occur. Director Postlewaite said that there aren't that many issues, but when it happens, the panels are removed and replaced.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Prior Year Invoices

- 8. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0046](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$95,474.26 using available funds in various Department of Public Works Ordinary Maintenance Accounts for various services.

Commissioner Lathan explained that the majority of invoices are due to purchase orders being closed prematurely and invoices that were received late by the city. She explained how the purchase order system works and how some of purchase orders could get closed early. Chair Wilson asked if there might be an inter-departmental system that could be used for invoice tracking. Councilor Scott asked about a \$4,000 invoice for a hand hole service that he thinks could have been performed in-house by DPW staff and Superintendent Barbieri replied that DPW staff is not trained to perform that work. Councilor Scott also asked for additional details for invoice #2880 for work done on Allen Street.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

- 9. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2062](#))

Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$4,950 using available funds in the Human Resources Arbitration Services Account for FY 2022 arbitration services.

The funds are to pay a FY-22 invoice totaling \$4,950.00 to Gary D. Altman for arbitration services. The invoice wasn't paid within the fiscal year because it was recently received by Human Resources for payment.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

- 10. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2061](#))

Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$3,012.03 using available funds in the Human Resources Professional & Technical Services Account for May 2021 Employee Assistance Program.

The funds are to pay a FY-21 invoice totaling \$3,012.03 to New Directions for the May 2021 Employee Assistance Program. The invoice wasn't paid within the fiscal year because there was a contractual update and accounts had to be reconciled.

Councilor Kelly asked for information about the Employee Assistance Program and Liaison Carrillo explained that it's to provide various resources to employees.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

- 11. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2060](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$358 using available funds in the Human Resources Professional & Technical Services Account for pre-employment placement exams and drug screens.

The funds are to pay a FY-22 invoice totaling \$358.00 to Cambridge Health Alliance Occupational Health for pre-employment placement exams and drug screens. The invoice wasn't paid within the fiscal year because it was not received by the city until September 15, 2022. HR currently has \$1,807.00 available in FY-22 funding; the invoice attached is for \$2,165.00. HR is requesting \$358.00 as it is the difference needed to pay the invoice.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

- 12. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0044](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$796.67 using available funds in the City Clerk Office Supplies Account for various supplies.

Liaison Carrillo noted that documentation is attached to the item.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

- 13. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0017](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$3,332 using available funds in the Office of Sustainability and Environment Ordinary Maintenance Professional and Technical Services Account for preventative maintenance of solar arrays.

The invoices were not paid due to a clerical error. OSE has since issued new protocols for invoicing and these processes, along with the addition of a Financial Analyst to the team, will ensure necessary redundancy and transparency to help avoid these issues in the future.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Transfers

- 14. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0037](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$5,000 from the Office of Sustainability and Environment Ordinary Maintenance Account to the Office of Sustainability and Environment Personal Services Account to reallocate approved funding for interns to the appropriate budget line.

The request is being made to transfer funding to a more appropriate budget line. OSE anticipates hiring an intern once the transfer is approved by the City Council.

Councilor Kelly asked if there are paid interns in any other department and Liaison Carrillo will provide an answer.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Orders

15. Resolution (ID # [22-1798](#)) By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly, Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson
That the Administration update this Council on efforts to use District Improvement Financing to capture new tax growth, specifically for new affordable housing.

See the attached response from Finance Director Ed Bean.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

16. Order (ID # [22-1517](#)) By Councilor Kelly, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Finance and the Budget Director update this Council on the progress of the free cash certification and any anticipated plans for additional free cash use.

See the attached response from Finance Director Ed Bean.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE