



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

December 3, 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	

Others present: Captain Rich Lavey - SPD, Sgt. Sal Fusco - SPD, Christine Morin - DPW, Doug Kress - HHS, David Shapiro - Law, Ron Bonney - Fleet, Alan Inacio - OSPCD, Tom Galligani - OSPCD, Luisa Oliveira - OSPCD, Kristen Stelljes - CPA, Frank Golden - Assessor, Ed Bean - Finance, Annie Connor - Mayor's Office, Khushbu Webber - Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:04 PM by Chairman White and adjourned at 9:51 PM.

Approval of the November 12, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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204888: That the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Director of Finance report to this Board how much money was spent per year on girls' programs and boys' programs during FY16, FY17 and FY18 to date.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205086: That the Administration clarify for this Board the role of Stantec Corp. as a contractor tasked with building the proposed storm water storage tank at Nunziato Field, and as a consulting firm for US2, the Union Square Master Developer.

Councilor Ewen-Campen raised the concern that if the same consultants are used by the City for infrastructure improvements also work for the developers who will benefit from those infrastructure improvements it raises the concern of conflicts of interest, that the City is subsidizing developers. Mr. Raiche addressed this item and referenced his email to the Committee, saying that he is confident that there has been no conflict of interest because a firewall exists. Also the City staff determines the actual

work to be done and potential costs while the consultants basically deal with the implementation of the work. Councilor Ewen-Campen thinks that the arrangement gives the impression that the city is involved in a project more than it should be.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205316: Finance Director submitting the city's FY 2017 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report.

Because of the large amount of matters that were before the Finance Committee, the Committee had been unable to schedule a meeting to review the Report. Mr. Bean informed the committee that the FY-19 report is being worked on now.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205905: That the Director of SPCD provide to this Board, in conjunction with its FY19 budget review, a list of upcoming commercial development and include the square footage and linkage payment projections, with corresponding payment dates.

Ms. Connor asked that this be placed on the next agenda so that Mr. Proakis may be in attendance.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206164: That, pursuant to Ordinance 2-121, this Board authorizes and requires the employment of other counsel to issue legal opinion and assist in resolving the questions of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee around sequencing of appointments and confirmation, and on release of requested information from the Administration for consideration by the Committee.

Councilor Ewen-Campen's motion that the Administration comply with Order #206164, relative to the employment of other counsel, was approved.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206486: That the City take by eminent domain for a public purpose the property at 217 Somerville Ave, for the sum of \$1,200,000.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206886: Special Counsel conveying the City's GLX License Agreements.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207563: 23 residents submitting a petition re: #206486, a proposed order of taking at 217 Somerville Ave.

RESULT:	PLACED ON FILE
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207583: 62 residents submitting a petition re: #206486, a proposed order of taking at 217 Somerville Ave.

RESULT: PLACED ON FILE

207645: Renee Scott submitting comments re: #206486, a proposed Order of Taking at 217 Somerville Ave.

RESULT: PLACED ON FILE

207746: That the Director of Finance provide a financial update on all funds that FRIT paid to the City pursuant to the covenant, any funds expended by the City from those payments and the amount remaining and the accounts in which these funds remain.

Ms. Connor requested that this be placed on another agenda so that Mr. Proakis may be present.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208269: That the Administration and Director of Finance implement opportunities for community participatory budgeting for FY21.

Mr. Bean stated that this has been discussed internally, largely with regard to capital projects. Mr. Bean stated that he would like to discuss this matter with the Engineering Department and the Capital Projects Director. Mr. Bean expressed the concern that the City might not have the staff to undertake this task.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208347: Community Preservation Act Manager submitting the FY19 CPA Annual Report.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

208697: That the Administration consider granting free use of Blue Bikes to city staff.

Ms. Connor said that this was considered in the past and that an internal survey was conducted, the response to which was not significant.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

208988: That the Chief Assessor utilize a valuation method for commercial real estate that takes into account the financial impact of the bridge closings on businesses located in such properties.

Mr. Golden said that anyone who feels injured should file for an abatement and meet with him, personally.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

209064: That the Director of SPCD report on how the funds allocated for the “Bridge Hopper” shuttle will be re-allocated, in light of data showing that the Bridge Hopper

shuttle has shown low ridership.

Mr. Inacio stated that there are no plans to change the program at the present time or to re-allocate funds. The ridership was lower than expected and he will provide the data to the committee.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209239: Assistant City Solicitor requesting to appear in Executive Session to discuss settlement of a pending claim.

A roll call vote was taken to enter into Executive Session to discuss this matter. Councilors Ewen-Campen, Rossetti, Ballantyne and White voted in the affirmative. Councilor McLaughlin was absent.

The committee entered into Executive Session at 9:40 PM and then returned to the regular meeting at 9:49 PM. Chairman White announced that no votes were taken in Executive Session other than the vote to adjourn.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209266: Requesting approval of a transfer of \$3,000 within SPCD's Economic Development Division, from its Ordinary Maintenance Account to its Personal Services Account, for a temporary fabrication lab door monitor.

Mr. Inacio addressed this item.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209230: Requesting acceptance of a \$400,000 grant that requires a match, from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to the SPCD Parks and Urban Forestry Division for the Central Hill Playground.

This request is related to the request to declare the Central Hill Park in perpetuity, which is discussed in 209305.

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
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209231: Requesting acceptance of a \$68,000 grant with no new match required, from the Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department for the purchase of a K-9 vehicle.

Captain Lavey and Mr. Bonney addressed this item and explained that two models are being considered. The vehicle is not militarized though the doors of the vehicles would be bullet resistant.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209232: Requesting acceptance of a \$25,600 grant with no new match required, from the MA Emergency Management Agency to the Health and Human Services Department for emergency preparedness equipment trailers and implementation of a live drill to test an emergency dispensing plan.

Mr. Kress told the committee that this is partnership with the city's Fire Department and will be used for city-wide training. A live drill is being planned and the public will be made aware of it when it occurs.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209199: Proposing an amendment to Ordinance 2-123 - Prosecution of Legal Proceedings, to add a new last sentence: "Such notice shall include the name(s) of the plaintiff(s), a description of the nature of the claims brought by the plaintiff(s), and the amount of damages and any other relief sought by the plaintiff(s)."

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209313: Requesting an appropriation of \$150,000 from Dilboy Field Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings for design services for field improvements.

Ms. Oliveira explained that the funds would be used for the design services to redesign the turf field at Dilboy. Mr. Bean said that there would still be in excess of \$69,000 in retained earnings. Councilor Rossetti asked why the city was taking on the cost for this and was told that the state wasn't contributing to the cost and the city wanted to maintain the field in a safe condition.

Councilor Ballantyne would like to have the details of the city's contract with DCR regarding Dilboy, in writing, as well as an update of the city's fields. Ms. Connor will attempt to secure the current MOA between the 2 parties. Chairman White queried if this was a maintenance or capital expense, since his recollection is that the city was responsible for maintenance and DCR was responsible for capital improvements. As a result the Committee voted to discharge the item without a recommendation to allow Ms. Connor to provide the requested information to the full Council.

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
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209309: Requesting the appropriation of \$200,000 from the CPA FY20 Fund for the Open Space Acquisition and Improvements Stabilization Fund.

Chairman White recused himself from all discussion and votes on this item.

Ms. Stelljes explained how the funds would be used. Councilor Ewen-Campen confirmed that the idea is to add to this fund each year.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209308: Requesting the appropriation of \$205,436 from the CPA FY20 Fund to the Somerville Museum for construction of an elevator.

Chairman White recused himself from all discussion and votes on this item.

Ms. Stelljes explained how the funds would be used, adding that these funds would be added to funds already raised by the museum.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209312: Requesting the appropriation of \$25,000 from Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free

Cash") to the Dilboy Field Enterprise Fund in order to fund design services for Dilboy Field improvements.

See item #209313

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
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209307: Requesting the appropriation of \$300,000 from the CPA FY20 Fund for the construction of Central Hill Campus Phase I.

This request is related to the request to declare the Central Hill Park in perpetuity, which is discussed in 209305.

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
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209310: Requesting the appropriation of \$38,000 from the CPA Fund Historic Resources Reserve Account to the Elizabeth Peabody House Association for an addressable fire alarm system.

Chairman White recused himself from all discussion and votes on this item.

Ms. Stelljes explained how the funds would be used.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209304: Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$4,351,000 in a bond for Central Hill Campus Park and Open Space Improvements.

This item is interconnected with the discussion in item 209305.

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
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209305: Requesting approval to dedicate Central Hill Playground to Open Space and Recreational Use in perpetuity.

Mr. Inacio explained that land must be dedicated in perpetuity in order to receive the grant. Councilor Ewen-Campen thought that some of this land was already under Chapter 97 and he was informed that the playground area was never formally dedicated in perpetuity.

Councilor Rossetti asked about the parking phase of the Campus Plan and was informed that the parking is being handled through the Mobility Department. She stated that she will not vote for approval of this item until something is done about the parking situation at the new high school.

Chairman White stated that he will not vote for this item due to the confusion of the presentation, especially with regard to the different scopes of work and the pricing. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked if Highland Avenue was going to be re-paved and was told that only portions of it would be done. He was informed that the Administration intended to re-pave Highland Ave. as part of the future Spring Hill sewer separation project. He asked when the decision was made and wanted to know why he wasn't informed about it. He expressed his frustration about this.

Councilor Ewen-Campen's motion *that the Administration provide the timeline for the re-paving of Highland Avenue, including any planned projects*, was approved.

Chairman White pointed out that this item was presented to the Council just over a month before the deadline date and said that the Council shouldn't be an after-thought.

President Ballantyne mentioned concerns by a member of the Urban Forestry Committee regarding some of the plantings and was told that the grass mixture selected is more pollinator friendly and that this information was made known at the Urban Forestry Committee meeting. She also questioned the use of rubberized materials

Councilor Ewen-Campen has concerns about the lack of a railing along the path from the intersection of Walnut Street and Highland Avenue to the library in the present day and in the future plans, especially since there is a senior residence across the street. He asked that a handrail be provided. He also asked that this item be kept in committee. After further discussion, the committee voted to report the item out of committee to the full Council, with no recommendation.

Because of the need for information, Council Ewen-Campen moved that the items relating to this matter, 209230,209307 and 209304 be reported out by the Committee without a recommendation to provide the administration the opportunity to provide additional information. The Committee unanimously approved the Motion.

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
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209316: Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$3,117.96 using available funds in the Building and Grounds Fire Alarm Account for the payment of the Settlement Agreement with Simplex Grinnell.

Mr. Shapiro told the committee that the city received a demand letter for \$35,000 from Simplex. The city, however, determined that it was being billed for services beyond the amount of the contract for the work in the contract. As a result, a settlement was reached for \$3,117.96.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209277: Requesting to transfer CPA funds totaling \$10,781 from the CPA Fund Budgeted Reserve to designated CPA reserves.

Ms. Stelljes explained that this is the allocation of the state match, and the balance will remain in the CPA fund.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209320: Community Preservation Act Manager submitting a summary of FY20 Community Preservation Act funding recommendations.

Chairman White recused himself from all discussion and votes on this item.

Ms. Stelljes explained the application process and the awarding of funds as well as partnering city and community entities on projects.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209275: Chief Assessor's Classification Hearing Report regarding the adoption of Tax Levy Percentages for FY 2020, including a minimum residential factor and a residential

exemption.

Mr. Golden continued the presentation from the November 26, 2019 City Council Special meeting.

Residential new growth is down 6% and commercial new growth is up nearly \$90 million. Industrial new growth is down \$4 million and Personal Property new growth is up \$10 million. Mr. Golden explained how personal property is accounted for and assessed. The existing commercial stock increased in value by 5% and is not included in the new growth figures. Commercial growth allows some of the tax burden to be shifted from residential taxpayers. Councilor Ballantyne stated that she doesn't see the residential burden lessening, adding that pay increases aren't keeping pace with the increases in property taxes.

Mr. Golden told the committee that an independent appraisal was done on the Marriot property (at 375 Canal St.) and the city was advised to separate the condos from the hotel to realize greater value. He also commented that an acre parcel at Cambridge Crossing is selling for about \$5 million.

86% of the property in the city is residential and the residential tax levy percentage decreased from 75.96% in FY-19 to 75.79% in FY-20. Mr. Golden explained the 3 options available to the Council for setting the tax rate. Chairman White asked that the prior year's actual tax be used when comparing options, to reflect the real difference. Councilor Ewen-Campen queried how a tax increase would impact tenants and said that he wants to keep taxes low for financially strapped seniors, not for people who are purchasing million-dollar homes.

Chairman White's motion that the City Council adopt a minimum residential factor of 87.9553 as the legal minimum for the City of Somerville for FY-2020, was approved.

Chairman White's motion that the City Council accept the provisions of Chapter 59 Section 5C approving the residential exemption of 35% of average assessed value for owner occupied property for FY-2020, was approved.

Mr. Bean presented and reviewed the FY-20 Tax Recapitulation Summary.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209227: Requesting the appropriation of \$2,300,000 from the Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Parking Meter Receipts Account in order to reduce the FY2020 Tax Levy.

Currently, there is \$2,406,000 in receipts available now, so \$106,000 would remain if the item is approved. The city's free cash balance is \$18,129,550.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209265: Requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$75,000 to the Kennedy School Pool Enterprise Fund to replace the pool filter.

Ms. Connor said that the funds are for the filter in pool. Councilor Rossetti asked who was in charge of the pool, now, and Ms. Connor will provide that information.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209273: Requesting a supplemental appropriation of \$500,000 to the Engineering Division Capital Outlay Street Repairs Account in order to perform mill and overlay paving of the

travel way in prioritized streets.

Mr. Raiche gave a presentation supporting the need for this request. At the current funding level, the city is able to complete about 1 mile of paving per year. He explained a different approach, i.e., re-paving travel lanes as opposed to the full width of streets and sidewalks. A benefit of this approach is to allow sidewalk reconstruction to be performed where it's needed most and not necessarily on the street being re-paved. Mr. Raiche noted, however, that if a street is re-paved from curb to curb, then the sidewalks of the street must be done at the same time.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209276: Requesting to transfer CPA funds totaling \$468,808 from the CPA Undesignated Fund Balance to designated CPA reserves per the recommendation of the Community Preservation Committee.

Ms. Stelljes explained that there were two sources of extra funding and that extra funds must be moved to the budgeted reserves at the end of the year.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209278: Requesting to appropriate \$12,683 from excess FY20 Community Preservation Act Fund revenue to the Community Preservation Act Fund Budgeted Reserve.

Ms. Stelljes stated that this is the actual amount of the state match.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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Handouts:

- Central Hill Campus (with 209305)
- Comments - T Antonino (with 209230, 209307, 209304)
- Memo - R Raiche (with 205086)
- Tax Recap Summary (with 209275)