



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

6:00 PM

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:01 pm by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 7:06 pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Burnley, Clingan and Wilson), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Scott).

Also present: Richard Raiche - Director of Infrastructure Asset Management, Ed Bean - Finance Director, Rachel Nadkarni - Director of Economic Development, Gregory Jenkins - Director of the Arts Council, Anna Gartsman - Director of Somerstat, Kimberly Hutter - Legislative Liaison, Emily Wisdom - Somerville Police Department Director of Finance and Administration, Catherine Lester Salchert - Assistant City Solicitor, James Mucci - Somerville Fire Department Director of Finance and Administration, and Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

Present:	City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah
Absent:	Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-1711](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of November 10, 2025.

RESULT:	<u>ACCEPTED</u>
AYE:	City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah
ABSENT:	Ward Two City Councilor Scott

Communications and Discussions

2. Officer's Communication (ID # [25-1451](#)) Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management conveying the draft Combined Sewer Overflow Plan.

Richard Raiche, Director of Infrastructure Asset Management, reported that the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority Board of Directors has discussed the plan. The Charles and Mystic River Watershed Associations have expressed interest in implementing a higher and more costly level of control. The board is scheduled to vote in December, and they may request a one-month extension if allowed by the Department of Environmental Protection. Rates could increase by 4 to 7 percent under the higher level of control.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Appropriations

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1680](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$407,090 from the Water Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings Account to the Water Enterprise Fund Debt Service Account to fund debt service for a Massachusetts Water Resource Authority loan.
- Ed Bean, Finance Director, shared that this loan, funded from free cash, was executed in mid-June after the budget was submitted. Councilor Mbah asked whether the loan is from the City of Somerville to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), and Richard Raiche, Director of Infrastructure Asset Management, confirmed that it is, explaining that this is an annual pipeline replacement project and that the MWRA offers zero-interest loans to its member communities.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah
- ABSENT:** Ward Two City Councilor Scott
4. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1679](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$403,980 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Debt Service, Interest on Notes/BANS Account for payment of interest for the 90 Washington Street property acquisition.
- Ed Bean, Finance Director, explained that this is the interest on the first-year bond anticipation note, which was floated to secure the 90 Washington Street property. The interest will go to the debt service fund in the general fund, with payment due in February 2026. In response to a question from Councilor Mbah, Director Bean noted that the city is borrowing short-term for up to two years and will need to convert to long-term borrowing if the property is not sold within that period, which would result in additional interest and principal payments. A second borrowing is expected in February 2027, when the next payment will be due.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah
- ABSENT:** Ward Two City Councilor Scott
5. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1698](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$100,000 from the Community Benefits Stabilization Fund to the Armory Revolving Fund to prepare the Armory for onboarding and support of tenants.
- Rachel Nadkarni, Director of Economic Development, reported that they anticipate issuing a request for proposals (RFP) for new tenants at the

Armory facility at the beginning of December, with a three-month submission period, and plan to start the selection process in March. They intend to hire a staff person to onboard tenants, with \$50,000 allocated for this role. An additional \$30,000 will be used to repair the front door and modernize the call box to improve public access, and \$20,000 will support custodial and maintenance services. In response to a question from Councilor Mbah, Director Nadkarni clarified that the Armory will be self-sustaining and that these are one-time startup costs. She emphasized that the RFP is for commercial artist tenants, not residential tenants.

Councilor Burnley highlighted that the building has had multiple facility and custodial needs and asked how much communication the Arts Council has had with current tenants regarding the planned use of the funds. Director Nadkarni said discussions have not occurred because funding has not yet been secured. Gregory Jenkins, Director of the Arts Council, added that some tenants pay full rent while others do not, and that this funding serves as a temporary stopgap measure. Councilor Burnley asked how rent prices will be determined, whether they will be tiered, and whether there will be public input. Director Jenkins explained that the master plan has been shared with the community, which supports a multi-tenant building. Rent levels will be based on current rates and anticipated operating costs, ensuring that tenants do not bear the full cost of building operations while maintaining stability for the arts.

Regarding the five-year plan, Councilor Burnley asked whether the goal is to be cash neutral. Director Nadkarni said they expect to generate \$200,000 in rents in the first year, with \$180,000 allocated to expenses, and plan 3-4 percent rent increases based on expected cost increases. They aim for a free cash flow of \$20,000 to \$30,000 and expect the building to be cash neutral after a full year of tenanting, while maintaining a small cash reserve for leverage in the first year. Councilor Clingan noted that he reviewed the master plan and expressed support for the proposal.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Scott

Transfers

6. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1620](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$15,500 from various SomerStat Ordinary Maintenance Accounts to the SomerStat Salaries & Wages Temporary Account to fund additional temporary employee time.

Anna Gartsman, Director of SomerStat, noted that the funding will be used to address a workload backlog, with temporary staff hired to assist in completing the work.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Scott

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1624](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$729 from the Communications Department Community Outreach Account to the Somerville High School (SHS) Salaries Account for SHS staff participation in the new PK-8 School Building Planning Focus Group Session.
- Kimberly Hutter, Legislative Liaison, noted that there is an error in this item and it will be resubmitted, clarifying that it should reference Somerville Public Schools rather than Somerville High School.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE WITHDRAWN**

Contracts and Agreements

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1649](#)) Requesting approval of a Pedestrian Access Easement and grant of a Maintenance License for 495 Columbia Street.
- Catherine Lester Salchert, Assistant City Solicitor, explained that this item concerns a public pedestrian easement and maintenance license for a portion of the curb-protected bike lane in the public way. Unlike most bike lanes, the developer will be responsible for maintaining this lane, including snow removal, rather than the city.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah
- ABSENT:** Ward Two City Councilor Scott
9. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1638](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$125.43 using available funds in the Department of Racial and Social Justice Computer Equipment Account for freight charges.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah
- ABSENT:** Ward Two City Councilor Scott
10. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1640](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$5,285.77 using available funds in the Police Department Computer Supplies Account for computer supplies.
- This item was taken up with item 25-1651.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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| | AYE: | City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah |
| | ABSENT: | Ward Two City Councilor Scott |
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11. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1622](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$1,765.28 using available funds in the Police Department Professional and Technical Services Account for case management services.
- This item was taken up with item 25-1651.
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| RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED</u> |
| AYE: | City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah |
| ABSENT: | Ward Two City Councilor Scott |
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12. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1646](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$1,547.55 using available funds in the Police Department Animal Control Professional and Technical Services Account for veterinary services.
- This item was taken up with item 25-1651.
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| RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED</u> |
| AYE: | City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah |
| ABSENT: | Ward Two City Councilor Scott |
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13. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1648](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$271 using available funds in the Police Department Badges, Emblems, Trophies Account for educational achievement award bars.
- This item was taken up with item 25-1651.
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| RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED</u> |
| AYE: | City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah |
| ABSENT: | Ward Two City Councilor Scott |
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14. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1651](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$54 using available funds in the Police Department Badges, Emblems, Trophies Account for a hat badge.
- Emily Wisdom, Director of Finance and Administration for the Somerville Police Department, shared that these invoices are mostly from 2023 and 2024. She noted that the department has reached out to vendors to provide the new shared invoicing email, as some invoices were being sent to former
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employees.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Scott

Grant and Gift Acceptances

15. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1621](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend an \$87,450 grant with no new match required, from the Massachusetts Office of Grants & Research to the Police Department for public safety staffing.

Emily Wisdom, Director of Finance and Administration for the Somerville Police Department, shared that this grant helps municipalities maintain public safety for communities with populations of at least 60,000 and budgets under \$200 per capita, primarily covering overtime gaps, especially during the holidays. She clarified in response to Councilor Burnley that the grant does not fund temporary staff and is only for overtime for current employees, and noted that the department reviews community events each year to anticipate spikes, such as elections and cultural events. In response to a follow-up question from Councilor Burnley, Director Wisdom explained that the “diversity supplier” requirement applies only to outside staff, which does not apply in this case. Councilor Clingan expressed support for the grant, noting that it helps supplement many of Somerville’s events.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Mbah

NAY: City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Scott

16. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1636](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$109,296 grant, with no new match required, from Executive Office of Public Safety to the Fire Department for staffing costs.

James Mucci, Director of Finance and Administration for the Somerville Fire Department, shared that this grant will provide overtime to cover sick leave, injury leave, and vacation, ensuring all shifts are fully staffed.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Scott