



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Legislative Matters Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 17, 2026

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Scott at 6:01 pm and adjourned at 6:30 pm on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Ewen-Campen, Strezo, Scott), and 1 absent (Councilor Davis).

Others present: Robert Berretta - Interim Chief Financial Officer School Department, Frank Golden - Chief Assessor, Legislative Liaison - Yasmine Raddassi, Assistant City Clerk, Legislative Services - Madalyn Letellier.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott

Absent: Ward Six City Councilor Lance L. Davis

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [26-0294](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Legislative Matters Committee Meeting of February 17, 2026.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

ABSENT: Ward Six City Councilor Davis

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0161](#))

Requesting the acceptance of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 13E, to establish a Special Education Reserve Fund.

Robert Berretta, Interim Chief Financial Officer for the School Department stated this is a great opportunity for collaboration between the city and the schools to provide support to the students most in need. This fund would help assist some unanticipated costs without endangering the rest of the School Department budget, and is designed to promote transparency and trust.

In response to a question from Councilor Strezo, Mr. Berretta outlined the process for distributing funds, noting that it require approval by a majority vote from both the School Committee and the City Council. Mr. Berretta shared the funds are directly related to covering costs for students.

Councilor Mbah inquired about the process to determine the needs of

students across the many different experiences of families and students in the district. Mr. Berretta responded that, generally, a process is in place to address deficits in students early on through data tracking and if interventions are not successful a referral is done for additional testing for special education services. He directed Councilor Mbah to school staff who directly serve students with special needs.

Councilor Ewen-Campen clarified upon the acceptance of this General Law that funds that are not used stay in this fund rather than being returned to the city in the general fund, Mr. Berretta confirmed that is the goal with this fund. Legislative Liaison Raddassi added that funds can be used in future years.

Discussion continued around the timeline for this item. Once the Massachusetts General Law is accepted, there is an item pending in the Finance Committee to appropriate funds.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

ABSENT: Ward Six City Councilor Davis

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0145](#))

Requesting acceptance of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 22J, to authorize an increase in the exemption amount granted under Chapter 59, Section 5, Clauses 22, 22A, 22B, 22C, 22E and 22F.

Frank Golden, Chief Assessor, shared context regarding the acceptance of the Hero's Act that brings a cost of living adjustment to the veterans exemption. The exemption acknowledges the different levels of disabilities that are classified for veterans and that determines the exemption available to them, If the law is accepted, the update would take effect in FY 2027.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott

ABSENT: Ward Six City Councilor Davis

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0144](#))

Requesting acceptance of Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 59, Section 5, Clause 22I, to authorize an annual cost of living adjustment increase in the exemption amount granted under Chapter 59, Section 5, Clauses 22, 22A, 22B, 22C, 22E and 22F.

Frank Golden, Chief Assessor, clarified this acceptance is part of the process when accepting Clauses 22J and 22I.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Mbah, Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen, City Councilor At Large Strezo and Ward Two City Councilor Scott
ABSENT: Ward Six City Councilor Davis