



# CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

## CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 5, 2019

### REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
William A. White Jr.	Chair	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	Vice Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	City Councilor At Large	Present	

The meeting was called to order by Chairman White at 6:54 pm and the Committee entered into recess at 6:55 pm to return to the City Council meeting and the Mayor's budget presentation. The Committee reconvened at 7:27 pm and adjourned at 10:30 pm.

Others present: School Department - Mary Skipper; Fran Gorski; Almi Abeyta; Chad Mazza; Susana Morgan; Lisa Glus; Regina Bertholdo; Lisa Kuh; Sarah Davila; Nomi Davidson; Cheryl Piccirelli; Rich Milillo; Christine Trevisone; Joan White; Mariana MacDonald; Leo DeSimone; Sibby LaGambina; Karen Woods; Shawn MaGuire; School Committee - Carrie Normand (Chair); Emily Ackman (Vice-Chair); Laura Pitone; Mayor Curtatone; Skye Stewart - Chief of Staff; Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison; Ed Bean - Finance; Michael Mastrobuoni - SomerStat; Doug Kress - HHS; John Long - Clerk; Tom Golden - Assessing; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees

### **1. FY-20 Departmental Budget Review and any associated departmental financial matters.**

#### **School Superintendent**

Councilor Davis recused himself from discussion of this department.

School Committee Chair Normand began by sharing the School Department's commitment to the whole child and the focus on instruction and student services, and the launching of an equity initiative.

The department's presentation can be found at [www.somerville.k12.ma.us/finance](http://www.somerville.k12.ma.us/finance).

Superintendent Skipper presented the department's budget and shared that there is

strength in the diversity of the schools. A few things to note are a significant number of newcomers to the district, students diagnosed with autism, and an increase in students with Down syndrome. The department is working to address the growing mental health needs of students.

Councilor Rossetti asked about the Chapter 70 funding from the state and Mr. Gorski shared that the budget was drafted using the \$30 per pupil number that is proposed in the Senate version of the legislation. Mr. Bean added that other revenue will be evaluated if the actual number is lower. Councilor Rossetti also inquired about some items that are over budget for FY2019 and Mr. Gorski noted that an expansion increased the curriculum budget and an increase in homeless student transportation led to the increase in the student services budget. Dr. Skipper emphasized that this budget is large, but the support is critical to student success.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked for clarification on the Equity Administrator position and it focuses on anti-bias work and developing cultural proficiencies. The position will establish priorities for the instructional teams in each school and work with the principals to create plans to work with students, parents, and staff. He asked further for a chart elaborating on staff retention. Councilor Hirsch shared that the Schools could benefit from more project management and communications staff. Dr. Skipper noted that she and her team will work to take advantage of City and other resources, but will consider the ways that they can expand for the future. Councilor Mbah wondered if there were any funds allocated for childcare, and the department is interested in utilizing grant funding for this, but are working to better understand parents' needs first.

President Ballantyne asked about spending information on male vs female athletics. She referenced a memo outlining that 63% of athletic spending at the High School is directed toward boys. Dr. Skipper agreed that this is a concern and with the new Athletic Director, will work to address access and building enthusiasm for athletics among girls. She added that some male-dominated sports like football and hockey also come with heavier equipment costs which skews the spending numbers. Councilor McLaughlin asked about what the community impact of the use of the Edgerly School during the High School building construction will be, and there will be a shuttle service offered as well as collaboration with the City and neighbors to find parking solutions. Councilor Clingan expressed concern about communication issues and noted that the schoolyards are the purview of the City, and better dialogue could be in place to address issues that cross City and School boundaries.

Chairman White noted that the City Council cannot address individual line-items for the School Department as it can for other departments.

### **City Council**

The title page and Table of Contents will be updated to reflect the change from Board of Aldermen to City Council.

### **City Clerk**

Mr. Long clarified that the line-item for his position is divided among his several duties, including City Clerk and Clerk of the City Council. He also serves the Licensing Commission. The Clerk's office generates thousands of records each year including vital records and business licenses, and manages the City archives. This budget includes funding for two part-time graduate student archivists to assist in moving the records and making them more accessible. In FY2019 the dog licensing software has been moved

online, and the online payment and appeal of non-criminal tickets are also now accessible online. The restoration of a principal clerk position to handle business licensing has been restored in the FY2020 budget, after remaining unfilled for 10 years. The City Clerk will also be supervising the Clerks of Committees, as it moves to a function in the Clerk's office, with the goals of serving the City Council with maximum efficiency and professionalism.

Councilor Rossetti wondered why the Clerk of Committees remains an independent budget page, rather than listed under the City Clerk, and also noted that with the additional responsibility for the City Clerk, there should be a commensurate financial increase. Chairman White asked whether a change of organization was required to be approved by the City Council. Mr. Mastrobuoni clarified that the Clerk of Committees is maintained as a separate cost center for accounting of funds, but this will not affect the chain of command. He will try to adjust the grouping in the updated budget. Mr. Long added that the salary for the Clerk of the City Council reflects the increase for the added responsibilities. Ms. Stewart noted that re-classification is based on significant additional responsibilities, rather than number of employees supervised. This position did not meet the threshold for re-classification when reviewed, so the change was made to the stipend, which is reflected in the position listed under the City Council. The position will be re-evaluated once the new roles are in place.

Chairman White expressed concern that the budget does not reflect previous years' salaries, so there is not a straightforward way to determine whether there has been an increase for any position.

Mr. Mastrobuoni will provide a list of vacant positions for the departments that will present their budgets in future meetings. The administration decided not to include which positions were vacant in the budget document, as it is a living document and this may change at any moment after the document is created and printed.

#### **Clerk of Committees**

Councilor Scott clarified that the (960) reference in the Legislative Clerk's position indicates the maximum number of hours that the position can work, and the \$34,000 fiscal year base indicates an estimate of the anticipated spending for the position, not a maximum of allowable hours. Mr. Long will provide an actual figure for the spending in FY2019. President Ballantyne noted that there is an error for the Asst Clerk of Committees position and the fiscal year base should be corrected to \$20,000.

#### **Revenue**

Councilor Rossetti asked about a number of specific line-items, beginning with the reason for the increase in line 418000, which is driven by the Partners HealthCare PILOT. Mr. Golden clarified that the Partners PILOT is calculated by \$1.38 per square foot of the building. A daycare has been added, which will increase this number. The escalator will not begin for several years. Councilor Rossetti asked for a breakout of the PILOT payments, which Mr. Golden will provide. Item 432004, for condo application fees, is projected to increase by 53.8%, which does not seem to reflect the recently passed ordinance. There has been a significant increase in applications which the administration does not expect will decrease, despite the ordinance. Councilor McLaughlin clarified that the goal is not to prevent condos, but rather to protect tenants. Mr. Bean added that the Condominium Review Board also raised the fee. Councilor Rossetti also asked about the projected increase in item 432011, and Mr. Mastrobuoni

will research and provide a response. She asked as well about the anticipated decrease in line 432027, franchise fees, and Mr. Mastrobuoni explained that this is the money received from Comcast and RCN, and the administration has projected no revenue from these entities to be safe. Item 432038, hearing fees, will also be researched for an explanation of what it entails as will item 442015 for livery/limo. Item 448011, plumbing permits, are being reviewed for the cost of providing them. Item 468008, MA court moving violations, is projected to decrease as more warnings are being issued and the City is still trying to get information from the state about the reimbursements. Item 477001 is projected to increase by 4.3% despite an increase in parking fees, which seems counterintuitive. Ms. Rinfret is the individual who can speak further to this, but there is a downward trend to the number of fines. The investment income has changed due to investment for the High School and some funds that will be moved to the stabilization fund. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked where the money is invested and Mr. Bean noted that they must be safe investments, and the Treasurer can create a report about the specific banks and investments. Item 468007, Medicaid reimbursement, is low despite increased student need, and Mr. Kress could better speak to this and the trends over recent years. Item 484012 is projected to decrease as bank revenue share is a business model that is dying and will not be available for much longer. Councilor Rossetti asked whether there was a plan to use any additional free cash or overlay surplus, and the aim is to appropriate to stabilization funds and reduce borrowing or debt service at a later date and not use this money to fund the operating budget.

Councilor Scott asked about line 415000, motor vehicle excise tax, and why there are transfers and adjustments. Mr. Mastrobuoni clarified that the change is due to a mid-year update (it is less a transfer than an adjustment). He asked further about line 448002 and what the plan is for building permits. Mr. Mastrobuoni clarified that the bulk of these payments comes from a small number of large projects. It can be difficult to predict which fiscal year these projects will occur in. The baseline of \$5.5M was established as a reasonable number to meet or exceed. Additional money can be appropriated to stabilization funds or free cash.

President Ballantyne asked for a reminder about where this information will be stored and Mr. Mastrobuoni shared the updated budget website:

[www.somervillema.gov/FY20budget](http://www.somervillema.gov/FY20budget). The document repository shows past documents, and additional handouts included as well, including breakdowns for larger departments. There have been updates to fund retroactive collective bargaining settlements that were voted on in FY19. The Personnel Listing tables have also been updated to reflect best practices and employee wishes in removing individual's names. An FTE column has been added in its place for further position clarification.

### **Handouts:**

- FY2020 School Committee Budget Presentation\_05June2019