



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL

JEFFERSON THOMAS (J.T.) SCOTT
WARD 2 CITY COUNCILOR

To: Honorable Mayor Katjana Ballantyne and Members of the City Council
From: JT Scott, City Councilor, Ward 2
RE: Conveying FY 2024 Budget Priorities
Date: March 22, 2023

Exec Admin: Senior Affairs Policy Advocate - a role within the Exec Admin whose responsibility to coordinate the creation of a reinvigorated policy advisory body within the city that involves seniors closely in the decisions made by departments such as Mobility, Housing, ISD, and Engineering. This role should be included in every decision making process to ensure that the perspective of our neighbors attempting to age in place in our city are considered in processes that too often overlook their impacts on seniors.

Arts Council: \$300k to expand Funding to the Arts Council for active anti-displacement work in the arts community. This would include an additional position within the Arts Council and additional Free Cash funds for the creation of a dedicated Arts Space Stabilization Fund to help establish and maintain affordable artist spaces in the city.

Funding for Housing Stability:

\$5M for "flex fund" rental assistance

\$2M for short-term and transitional housing, split between hotel room acquisition and an effort to sustainably create municipally-owned transitional housing opportunities.

\$500k for OHS Legal Assistance Services to expand access to more residents facing discrimination and displacement

\$10M to the Early Acquisition Trust Fund to support housing acquisition by the city via the Community Land Trust or other similar vehicles to increase the supply of permanently affordable housing.

\$10M investment in establishing a program similar to One+ Boston to enable mortgage acquisition for communities historically subject to discrimination achieving homeownership.

Alternative Emergency Response:

\$2M for the initial startup costs of establishing an Alternative Emergency Response department, housed within HHS or in a department of their own, but by no means managed by or co-responding with the Somerville Police Department. I would direct the administration to the impressive Public Health and Public Safety Committee meeting of February 27th 2023 for more details on how to implement such a program.

Rats:

\$300k in ISD for 100 additional SMART box "zap traps", 2 additional inspector positions within ISD, expanded replacement program from open trash bins to "BigBelly" styled sealed compactor units in public parks and on public ways, and other programs as directed by the Environmental Health Coordinator.

Transit:

Funding sufficient to implement a non-means-tested, universal free transit access program for every bus line in the city of Somerville.

Youth Mental Health:

Funding sufficient to provide robust mental health resources for youth, especially LGBTQ+ youth in our school system who have been suffering disproportionate impacts at this time.

Municipal Infrastructure Capacity and Training Program:

\$3M to create municipal, union, entry level jobs that increase our capacity to execute public works and infrastructure projects using in-house, local labor that strengthens our community, reduces costs, and keeps Somerville tax revenues in Somerville.

Public Health:

\$200k for 2 additional Public Health Nurse positions to improve our city's ability to respond to ongoing public health crises, including vaccination and testing initiatives.

Planning Department:

\$300k for 3 staff positions to support increase our internal capacity and ongoing work in zoning and neighborhood planning, including a dedicated zoning planner supporting the Land Use Committee in developing zoning proposals from the City Council.

Mobility Department:

\$100k for an additional traffic calming planner position and the ordinary maintenance costs needed to directly address quick-build projects outside of the standard Mobility Department capacity.

Waste Management:

Termination of the existing contracts for both waste disposal and recycling contracts retained by the city, to be replaced by municipal union workers in the DPW. Directly transferring the costs incurred in these contracts will reduce city expenditures on these lines, and also reduce the amount of costs incurred on snow removal contract labor. (In a 50-year-low fiscal year for snowfall, our snow removal budget exceeded targets by 40%. This measure can mitigate multiple cost centers while building internal municipal capacity, and would be cost-neutral.)

Capital Projects:

\$300k for 3 additional staff positions to provide direct oversight of the massive increase in projected Capital Improvement Plan projects over the next 5 years.

Water/Sewer:

Immediate 30% raises across the board for all Water/Sewer union positions to address the historic lows in in-house employment and reduce the exorbitant costs being paid to outside contractors to maintain our city's water and sewer systems.

Disability Commission:

\$100k for an independently hired Executive Director to be hired at the direction of the Chair and Commissioners of our Somerville Commission for People with Disabilities.

Women's Commission:

\$100k for an independently hired Executive Director to be hired at the direction of the Chair and Commissioners of our Somerville Women's Commission.

City Council:

\$550k to raise Council salaries to \$90k annually.

School Committee:

\$105k to increase School Committee salaries to \$30k annually.

Inspectional Services:

\$350k to add 4 new Inspector positions at the direction of the Superintendent of Inspectional Services.

Respectfully,

-JTS