



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

July 7, 2020
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Vice Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Michael Mastrobuoni - SomerStat, Ed Bean - Finance, George Proakis - OSPCD, Alan Inacio - OSPCD, Sarah Lewis - OSPCD, Michael Feloney - OSPCD, Ellen Shachter - OSPCD, Ton Galligani - OSPCD, Luisa Oliviera - OSPCD, Emily Monea - Chief of Staff, Annie Connor - Mayor's Office, Khushbu Webber - Legislative Liaison, Kim Wells - Asst. Clerk of Committees, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chairman Scott and adjourned at 10:50 PM on a Roll Call votes of 5 in favor (Councilors White, Rossetti, Mbah, Ballantyne and Scott) and none against.

Review of FY-21 Budget

Chair Scott began the meeting by saying that he would entertain a motion for adjournment to allow members time to review the information sent to them last night and uploaded today. The committee decided to continue on with the meeting, but asked, once again, that the Administration get information to the committee in a timely fashion.

Ms. Connor addressed a memo regarding the re-investing of funds from the Police Department cuts and reviewed what the administration considers areas of immediate need. There is a balance of \$250,000 that will be going towards the Racial and Social Justice Fund in addition to the original budgeted amount of \$750,000.

Chair Scott read 3 separate communications from Councilors Strezo, Niedergang and Davis into the record. Councilors Ballantyne and White felt that the points expressed in the communications might be better discussed in a Committee of the Whole. Councilor Ballantyne asked that future communications from councilors follow the established protocol by being sent to the Legislative Clerk for distribution to council members.

Chair Scott explained that the committee will continue its review of the OSPCD budgets, as they were presented on June 18th. Mr. Proakis gave a brief budget overview and mentioned 3 areas of focus for a COVID-19 response. He explained that OSPCD has the ability to fund its departments through the city's general fund and from federal grants. This budget contains several positions that have been totally or largely shifted to being funded by grants rather than the general fund. This shift in funding amounts to \$316,000. Mr. Proakis reviewed the grants used to address COVID-19. He also spoke about available rental and small business assistance.

The committee reviewed the following OSPCD departments:

Administration

Mr. Inacio reported a reduction of 9.7% in the FY-21 budget compared to last year. Councilor Rossetti inquired about the increased budget for line numbers 542000 and 542006 and Mr. Inacio explained that the funds might be needed to address COVID-19 issues once staff returns to their city hall offices. The CPA manager position has moved from SomerStat to the OSPCD Administration Department.

Planning & Zoning

Ms. Lewis reported a reduction of 11.4% in the overall FY-21 budget compared to last year. Councilors Rossetti, Scott and Ballantyne questioned various portions of the Professional and Technical Services (PTS) line and Councilor Ballantyne requested a written breakdown of PTS by tomorrow, detailing where the funds were supposed to go vs. where they were actually spent.

Housing

Mr. Feloney reviewed his proposed budget. Councilor Ballantyne inquired about the PTS line, noting that the amount of funding for the universal wait list increased from \$40,000 to \$60,000 and Mr. Feloney explained the reason for the increase. Chair Scott asked about the low year-to-date PTS expenditure and Mr. Feloney said that the figure was updated on July 5th and there is an unencumbered balance of about \$6,000. The amount of time from the marketing of an affordable property to occupancy is about 60 days. Councilor Mbah asked about the lead paint program and efforts to take care of the homeless population. Ten more units are expected to close towards the 100 Homes Program this week.

Office of Housing Stability

Ms. Shachter stated that her budget is essentially level funded. The case load for FY-20 was 1095 and since March of this year, there have been 579 cases. There are 10-12 bilingual volunteers assisting the staff. Currently, the department is about 3 weeks behind in providing rental assistance. The funds from the CARES ACT will be distributed, hopefully, in a month's time. Ms. Shachter said that she requested 1 additional position and a doubling of the department's flex fund to \$200,000.

The committee recessed at 8:46 PM and reconvened at 8:51 PM.

Economic Development

Mr. Galligani reported an overall reduction of 26.4% in the department's FY-21 budget. The PTS reduction is due to various reasons, including the sun-setting of some programs. Councilor

Rossetti asked about the plan for the \$1,000,000 community development fund and Mr. Galligani said that applications have been reviewed and available funds should be disbursed in the next 3 weeks. The city's unemployment rate is at 12% and Mr. Galligani said that there is \$1.3 million in resources in the Job Creation and Retention Trust Fund which may be used to transition the unemployed into new or different jobs. Councilor Rossetti asked for information on the fund and Mr. Bean said that he would post it online tomorrow.

Redevelopment Authority

Mr. Galligani reported an overall reduction of 80.5% in the department's FY-21 budget.

Mobility

Mr. Rawson reported an overall reduction of 5.2% in the department's FY-21 budget. Some planned initiatives were postponed due to the effects of COVID-19. Councilor Ballantyne requested a written breakdown of the projects accomplished and deferred. She also asked for the status of work on Powderhouse Blvd. and Mr. Rawson replied that data collection will commence in September/October. The intersection of Powderhouse Blvd and Alewife Brook Pkwy. is being designed using state funds and designs should be received by the end of July. Community meetings will probably occur in the fall. Councilors Mbah and Scott expressed their concerns about the delays in addressing major projects and constituent concerns. Councilor Scott asked if the performance grading for Newport Construction has been followed up. Mr. Rawson stated that some of the performance bond is still being retained by the state. He will check with the Law Department for any updates.

Public Space and Urban Forestry

Ms. Oliviera reviewed the department's budget and noted that it reflects a 21.8% decrease. Many of the projects in the queue have been stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Central Hill Playground project is moving forward and the work on Prospect Hill and the Allen Street playground are actively in the construction phase. Councilor Ballantyne asked for a written status of all projects in the queue. 124 trees were planted last fall. Councilor Rossetti asked about the school yards and Ms. Oliviera said due to the financial situation in the city, they are not able to go out to bid. The Healey School project will cost about \$6.5 million. Councilor Rossetti would like the administration to send letters to the Healey School community explaining why the project is not moving forward at this time. Mr. Bean thinks that the project will happen, but perhaps not until the next construction season. Councilor Scott asked for rough time-lines on all projects.

Executive Administration

Ms. Monea stated that a new position is being added for the Racial and Social Justice Program.

The committee recessed at 10:08 PM and reconvened at 10:13 PM.

Councilor Rossetti asked about the Dues and Memberships line and requested a list and cost for each item in that line. Ms. Monea spoke about the new position being requested and what it will entail and how the hiring process will work. Outreach to fill the position will begin as soon as possible after the FY-21 budget is approved. Chair Scott asked if the administration had any response to Boston City Councilor Wu's proposal. Ms. Monea said she wasn't familiar with the

proposal but would provide a response after she reads the article. She stated that the \$150,000 Special Item line was included in the budget to provide flexibility to the RSJ Director to engage the community in ways to re-imagine law enforcement and is not for consultant driven services. Councilor Rossetti spoke about the desire for the City Council to have its own legal counsel and asked why the Mayor is hesitant to provide this. Ms. Connor explained that outside counsel has been assigned when a conflict exists with the City Solicitor, and from a legal perspective, the needs of the Council can be met by the Solicitor's Office. Councilor Rossetti disagrees and believes that a line should be included in the Council's budget. She asked the Administration to reconsider its objection. Councilor Scott said that the Mayor has essentially made a cut to the Council's budget by not providing funds for private counsel.

Councilor Scott made a motion to cut line 530000 (Special Items Professional and Technical Services) by \$150,000 in the Executive Administration budget. The motion was tabled. Councilor Scott stated that the funds that are being reserved in the Executive Administration budget are for legislative processes and should be reallocated to the City Council.

Unfinished Business

Motion by Councilor Rossetti to reduce line number 571001 (In State Conferences) in the City Council Budget by \$1,199.00. The motion was tabled by the Finance Committee on June 22, 2020. This item was kept on the table.

Motion by Councilor Rossetti to reduce line 572000 (Out of State Travel) in the Health and Human Services Department's budget by \$1,350. The motion was tabled by the Finance Committee on July 1, 2020. Statement This item was kept on the table.

Motion by Councilor Rossetti to reduce line 542001 (Printing and Stationery) in SomerStat's budget by \$16,600. The motion was tabled by the Finance Committee on July 6, 2020. This item was kept on the table.

Handouts:

OSPCD 2021 budget intro

FY21 General Fund budget update_reinvesting PD cuts FINAL 7.6.20

Email - K Strezo

Email - M Niedergang

Email - L Davis