



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 6, 2022

6:00 PM

Others present: Demetrios Vidalis – Director of Water and Sewer, Rich Raiche – Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management, Catherine Lester Saichert – Special Counsel – Law, Danielle Palazzo - Executive Administrator – DPW, Arn Franzen – Director of Parks and Open Space, Ed Bean – Auditor, Brad Rawson – Director of Mobility, Jill Lathan – Commissioner of Public Works, Aneesh Sahni – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 7:59 PM on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Kelly, Pineda Neufeld, McLaughlin, Scott and Wilson), none against and none absent.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Jake Wilson, Vice Chair Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Matthew McLaughlin, Judy Pineda Neufeld and Charlotte Kelly

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [22-2051](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 17, 2022.

RESULT: **APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Retirement Board

2. Officer's Communication (ID # [22-1855](#)) Retirement Board requesting approval of an increase in the retiree cost of living adjustment base to \$16,000.

Ed Bean, speaking as Chair of the Somerville Retirement Board reported that the Retirement Board voted to grant a COLA to its retirees. Raising the base from \$15,000 to \$16,000 will add about \$30 to each of the 965 retirees' monthly check. Chair Bean noted that in 2019 and 2020, the Somerville Retirement Fund outpaced the other 140 retirement systems in the state with respect to its return on investments. This adjustment will affect the city's appropriation going forward, beginning with the next fiscal year. Chair Bean also mentioned that there is a proposal on this week's City Council agenda to increase the FY 2023 cost of living adjustment to 5% on the current \$15,000 base, which would be retroactive to July 1 of this year.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Land Dedications

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2000](#)) Requesting approval to dedicate for recreational use, in perpetuity, the parcel of land known as Henry Hansen Park.

Director Franzen explained that this is a requirement of a park grant from DOEEA. The grant has been awarded but won't be activated until this item is approved.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Lease Agreements

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2041](#)) Requesting approval of the Alternative Transportation Corridor Lease Agreement with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA).

Director Rawson explained that this is a lease by which the city will maintain and operate the community path on behalf of the MBTA. Special Counsel Saichert explained that some terminology is being updated and that many of the provisions of the prior lease are included in this new lease. Councilor McLaughlin asked if there are any restrictions on the use of the bike path and Special Counsel Saichert replied that this is still being worked on. Councilor McLaughlin asked that the lease contain language allowing the city to add community art, etc. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked if the opening date may be extended beyond the 6-month projection and Director Rawson commented that is up to the Council. Director Sahni asked that councilors stick to the topics related.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Bonding

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2017](#)) Requesting authorization to borrow \$89,332,819 in a bond, and to appropriate the same amount for the Poplar Street Pump Station construction project.

Director Raiche reviewed the goals, details and financing of the project. He gave a presentation and spoke about combined sewer subsystems, legacy flooding issues, combined sewer overflows, prohibitions on development, stormwater offsets, and the ability to use the added capacity of the MBTA drainage system. Director Raiche spoke about how this project would help the development of various areas of the city and increase revenue while aligning with the goals of SomerVision. He continued the presentation

explaining that the project would move stormwater from the MWRA system to the MBTA's. A change to the composition of the storage tank will reduce cost by \$8 million and construction time by 18 months with a projection date for completion in November of 2025. All parties are in agreement with making the connection to the MBTA system on Polpar Street, rather than Fitchburg Street. The lifespan of the tank is normally 50 years, but with proper maintenance, that could be extended to 100 years. The projected cost for maintenance is not yet known.

The total cost of the project is \$102 million, with \$10 million coming from ARPA funds and up to \$2.5 million from a federal earmark. The remainder would be borrowed by the city in tranches through bonding. The estimates were compiled based on some core financial model assumptions. Director Raiche spoke about the impact of this project on local water and sewer rates, noting that the numbers are only preliminary estimates and that he hopes to have refined water/sewer rate increase numbers in April/May.

A second community meeting to discuss the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Control Plan is scheduled for December 15th. The link to register for that meeting is <https://tinyurl.com/CSOmeeting2>.

Director Vidalis spoke about financial assistance programs and Director Sahni spoke about the administration's outreach efforts to inform residents of the financial programs available for water/sewer. Councilor Kelly asked about the projected water/sewer rate increases over time, noting that they would double over 10 years. Chair Wilson would like a dedicated mailer sent to residents, making them aware of the project and the available assistance programs.

Additional information is available at <https://voice.somervillema.gov/citywide-drainage-and-water-quality-master-plan>

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Transfers

- 6. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2015](#))

Requesting an interdepartmental transfer of \$175,000 from the DPW Buildings, OT Labor Account to the DPW Grounds, OT Labor Account for Grounds overtime labor costs through FY 2023.

Commissioner Lathan explained that this was for work performed during the separation of the Buildings and Grounds Departments.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Prior Year Invoices

- 7. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2005](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$224,473.60 using available funds in various Department of Public Works ordinary maintenance budgets.

Commissioner Lathan reviewed the invoices and noted that they were received after the close of the fiscal year. Councilor Scott inquired about some of the vendor charges. Ms. Palazzo explained that for the construction equipment, vendors charge the city for equipment and operators at an hourly rate. Commissioner Lathan stated that these funds would be taken from the department's snow budget. Councilor Kelly asked what the snow budget balance is and Ms. Palazzo will provide that information.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 8. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-1824](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$1,500 using available funds in the Department of Racial and Social Justice Translation Services Account for Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services.

The vendor submitted the information to the incorrect city department, which created a delay in processing the invoice in a timely manner. The information was updated and subsequent invoices have been paid to the vendor.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 9. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2008](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$1,575 using available funds in the Human Resources Ordinary Maintenance Advertising Account for advertising vacant city positions.

These invoices are due to the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA). The Human Resources Department (HR) did not receive 14 invoices dated 5/23/2022 and 7 invoices dated 6/2/2022 in time to pay them within the fiscal year. The city has conducted an audit of all FY22 invoices with MMA and verified that payment of these 21 invoices is required for the advertising services rendered to the city in the prior fiscal year. Moving forward, HR

has developed better internal tracking to track advertising invoices in real-time and keep all payments timely.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 10. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2009](#))

Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$3,850 using available funds in the Human Resources Arbitration Services Account for FY 2021 arbitration services.

The attached invoice for services rendered in May 2022 was received by Human Resources (HR) in FY23. The HR and Law Departments are working to streamline the receipt and payment of invoices for all arbitration matters moving forward.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 11. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2010](#))

Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$3,600 using available funds in the Human Resources Professional & Technical Services Account for temporary consulting services.

Human Resources worked with a consultant sourced from Robert Half temporary staffing services. This invoice was for work conducted in the pay period of 6/27/22-7/1/22. As this workweek had both FY22 and FY23 dates, HR is requesting prior year approval to pay this invoice. These hours have been reviewed and the work under this invoice was conducted in FY22.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 12. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2011](#))

Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$137.50 using available funds in the Human Resources Postage Account for FedEx delivery services.

Human Resources used FedEx services in March 2022. Unfortunately, the invoice did not come to HR in a timely manner for payment. HR has now received this invoice and verified that the charges are

accurate and have not been paid by the City.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Grant Acceptances

- 13. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-2006](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$53,200 grant with no new match required, from the Mass Cultural Council to the Arts Council for the Local Cultural Council grant program.

This grant program provides direct funding support to our City’s individual artists, organizations, and schools to conduct arts and cultural programming.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2022-12-6 RSJ Memo (with 22-1824)
- Finance - 2022-12-6 Arts Council Memo (with 22-2006)
- Finance - 2022-12-6 HR Memo (with 22-2008, 22-2009, 22-2010, 22-2011)