



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
CITY COUNCIL

NAIMA SAIT  
WARD 5 CITY COUNCILOR

March 11, 2024

RE: FY 2025 Budget Priorities

Dear Mayor Ballantyne:

I appreciate the opportunity to share my budget priorities that I hope will be included in Somerville's FY2025 budget.

- **Funding for a fair contract for Somerville Municipal Employees Association**

Funding to pay the highest wages and offer the best benefits to our municipal employees. Somerville has had open positions for an extended period of time, leading to outsourcing jobs to contractors at a significantly higher cost. Private contracts give us less oversight of the quality of work and create uncertainty about working conditions.

- **Continued funding for flexible rental assistance, legal assistance and retaining necessary staffing hired under ARPA program.**

Providing affordable housing and anti-displacement services are very pressing priorities.

- **Funding to activate an annual Warming and Cooling Center with the capacity to provide job search services**

Given the increase in homelessness, we need a plan for more beds to meet Winter time demand.

- **City-wide food waste collection**

This will help address environmental justice issues as everyone would be part of this program, not just the ones who can pay for this service. It will also reduce the rodent food source.

- **Funding to conduct a study of Somerville School building decarbonization**

Conduct a study of all Somerville school buildings in order to create a ten year comprehensive plan for decarbonization of building systems and improvement of building envelope performance (e.g., upgrading roofs, fixing energy leaks, ensuring air infiltration systems are of highest-quality). This study must include estimations of current carbon emissions, energy use, and energy cost of operating school buildings.

- **Funding for staffing and programming to activate the high school as a youth center + a space for family engagement outside of school hours:**

The pandemic has had real negative consequences on our youth's social, emotional and academic development. Enhancing and expanding our youth programming is a great way to promote youth leadership and build a sense of belonging. Participating in intergenerational activities are the best way to build community.

The high school building can also be used as a space for our non-English speaking families to gather and learn about ways to advocate for themselves and their children.

- **Funding to establish an alternative emergency response program to respond to non-criminal calls**

This will ensure that first responders to mental health crises are trained and unarmed clinicians.

- **Use ARPA funding for medical debt forgiveness for Somerville residents**

Allocate funding to purchase and retire medical debt at a discount.

- **Funding for salary increase for elected officials**

The salary of City Councilors and School Committee members has not kept pace with the cost of living.

- **Continuing funds for free MBTA passes**

City employees, teachers, students, and low-income residents are benefiting from this and it would be great to continue funding this after ARPA funds expire.

- **Funding for an Office of Pest Control**

Staff to work on rodent mitigation.

- **Funding to repair the Armory roof**

As the owner of the Armory building, the City must repair the leaking roof.

Thank you for considering these budget priorities. I look forward to working with your administration and my colleagues on Somerville's FY2025 budget.