



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

July 6, 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: Greg Jenkins - Arts Council, Jill Lathan - Parks & Recreation, Ben Waldrip - Fields, Kristen Stelljes - SomerStat, Oliver Sellers-Garcia - Sustainability & Environment, Michael Mastrobuoni - SomerStat, Ed Bean - Finance, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:03 PM by Chairman Scott and adjourned at 9:00 PM on a Roll Call votes of 5 in favor (Councilors White, Rossetti, Mbah, Ballantyne and Scott) and none against.

Mr. Mastrobuoni updated the committee on the documents that have been requested by members.

Review of FY-21 Budget

Arts Council

Mr. Jenkins reported that the FY-21 budget request is 9.7% lower than last year's. He spoke about the culinary kitchen operations which opened last September. Revenue brought in through the kitchen is used for its operation. After being closed for 3 months, the kitchen will be opening up again this week for 4 days per week. A meeting was held this week to review permits for planned events and consideration is being given to holding smaller events. Once the budget is approved, Mr. Jenkins would like to create a grant program to help revamp things and to infuse more funds into programming. Chair Scott commented on the reduction in the Professional and Technical Services line saying that most of the department's funding goes back to the community. Mr. Jenkins explained how that line was reduced to allow programming to continue.

Chair Scott's motion *That the Mayor increase the Professional & Technical Services line (number 530000) in the Arts Council by \$35,000* was approved on a Roll Call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors White, Rossetti, Mbah, Ballantyne and Scott) to none against.

Chair Scott's motion *That the Mayor increase the Salaries line (511000) in the Arts Council by \$12,300 to fully fund the Nibble Kitchen Cultural Culinary Coordinator position* was approved on a Roll Call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors White, Rossetti, Mbah, Ballantyne and Scott) to none against.

Parks and Recreation

Ms. Lathan reported an overall increase of 0.9% in the department's budget request. Councilor Ballantyne asked that Ms. Lathan look into having Parks and Recreation work with SomerPromise. Ms. Lathan noted that her department works closely with the School Department to make sure that programming is in sync. Councilor Ballantyne asked how COVID-19 affected the department's programming and financing and Ms. Lathan explained that various meetings, mentoring, virtual recreation and other programming was conducted. Financially, the department didn't see that much of an impact, as most of the funds are spent on salaries. Councilor Ballantyne asked about the FY-21 plans and Ms. Lathan referred to the budget document to highlight the increases and noted that some programs, e.g., Sunsetters, have been moved under the Recreation Department. With regard to gender equity, Ms. Lathan reported that \$67,000 was spent on identified programs for girls and many programs have been organized for girls, e.g., softball, volleyball, basketball, football, etc. The department will also be focusing on non-binary issues as well as trying to break down barrier issues. Councilor Ballantyne asked that Ms. Lathan identify, (by July 9th), how the gender breakdown percentages moved since last year as well as a breakdown of supplies and equipment spending. She also asked why greater assistance isn't offered to allow girls to be involved in programming, e.g., providing baby sitting services to younger siblings or providing transportation to events.

Fields

Ms. Lathan said that the fields have been getting the rest they need and closures will continue as needed. Due to a lack of equipment and sharing equipment with the DPW, it's been a strain to provide all the maintenance the fields require. Mr. Waldrip spoke about the need for pickup trucks, a Toro bunker rake and a terrain cut mower. Ms. Lathan explained that the \$7,200 increase in In-State Travel is due to the department paying mileage reimbursement to employees using their private vehicles in the performance of their duties. Councilor Rossetti asked Ms. Lathan to find out if any other city departments are using this line in the same manner. Councilor White asked for a breakdown of the mileage figures. Mr. Mastrobuoni believes that some employees do receive mileage allowances and he will look into this further tomorrow. Councilor Rossetti asked for a breakdown of the Professional and Technical Services line as it appears that some data is missing. Mr. Mastrobuoni thinks it was an oversight that he will be able to correct tonight.

Dilboy Enterprise

Ms. Lathan said that the turf field needs to be replaced and various options are being considered. The city is responsible for bearing the cost of the renovation. The agreement between the city and DCR has expired and the parties have been meeting to negotiate a new agreement. Councilor White asked that any agreement reached be provided to the City Council. Councilor Ballantyne asked if the city gets to determine the specifications of the field and Ms. Lathan explained that DCR works with the city and if there are no restrictions on the design, the city will present options to the City Council for approval. Ms. Lathan said that DCR would not force the use on crumb rubber on an infield. Councilor White asked what the remainder of retained earnings would be and Mr. Bean stated that they would be strained due to the loss of revenue resulting from the pandemic.

Rinks Enterprise

Ms. Lathan said that the revenue projection is down compared to last year. Chair Scott asked if the SHS cheerleaders used the weight room and he requested a report of the room usage. Councilor White pointed out that the city is subsidizing the rinks to the tune of \$750,000 and Mr. Mastrobuoni stated the actual amount of the subsidy is \$483,282. Chair Scott asked about the rinks' use by private hockey academies and Ms. Lathan replied that many groups do use the rink by purchasing ice time that the city typically might not have sold. Ms. Lathan explained that the rink is a regional facility that the city manages for the DCR, adding that bringing in outside revenue is necessary to keep the rink in operation. Chair Scott asked if these companies have requested weight room access, as well, and Ms. Lathan was not aware of any such requests. Chair Scott requested additional information regarding these rentals/requests.

Kennedy Pool Enterprise

Ms. Lathan reviewed the budget for the pool. Councilor Ballantyne spoke about pool hours for seniors and Ms. Lathan is hoping to have this running this summer.

The committee recessed at 8:13 PM and reconvened at 8:18 PM.

SomerStat

Ms. Stelljes said that non-essential services have been removed from the budget. Councilor Mbah asked about data collection, data transparency and data camp. Ms. Stelljes replied that the Happiness Survey is conducted via U.S. Mail and the data is used to gauge residents' satisfaction with city services. Some data collection has been interrupted by the pandemic and the data camp was dropped from the budget.

Councilor Rossetti's made a motion to **reduce the Printing and Stationery line (number 542001) in SomerStat's budget by \$16,600.**

Ms. Stelljes commented that the Happiness Survey provides longitudinal data and if it's not captured, it can never be recovered. The rhythm of the survey is useful so comparison can be 'apples to apples'. What is really being examined is the wellbeing of the community, which could be useful in developing mental health initiatives. Chair Scott suggested changing the name of the survey.

Councilor Rossetti's motion was tabled.

Sustainability and Environment

Mr. Sellers-Garcia spoke about re-titling 2 positions with no change in salaries. Two planned projects have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 situation. He will examine if any of the consultant work for these projects could be performed in-house. He spoke about equity for everyone. Chair Scott asked about the Energy Master Plan and the cost for installing electric vehicle charging stations. Councilor Rossetti asked about solar panels for school buildings and why they couldn't be overseen by the Sustainability and Environment (S&E) Department rather than the Infrastructure and Asset Management Department. Mr. Sellers-Garcia thinks that it's a specialized task. Councilor Rossetti asked that he confer with Rich Raiche to see if oversight could be changed to S&E.

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 remained 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. This item remained on the table.