



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

March 10, 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: Annie Connor-Mayor's Office, Tom Galligani-OSCPD, George Proakis-OSCPD, Eileen McGettigan-Special Counsel City Solicitor's Office, Steve Craig-Constituent Services, Captain Rich Levey-Somerville Police Department and Ed Bean-City Auditor-Finance Department. David Webster from Federal Realty Investment Trust was also in attendance.

The meeting was held in the City Council Chambers and was called to order at 6:12 p.m. by Chairperson Scott and adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Approval of the February 11, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Information Requests

207746: That the Director of Finance provide a financial update on all funds that FRIT paid to the City pursuant to the covenant, any funds expended by the City from those payments and the amount remaining and the accounts in which these funds remain.

Mr. Proakis stated that item #3 is in response to item #2. There are no additional payments required by the covenant agreement. FRIT has committed to \$3.9M due to be paid out of the linkage payments.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209715: Director of SPCD responding to #207746 re: FRIT covenant payments.

Mr. Bean stated that some payments date back to 2007. There is a line item for Draw 7 Design and Improvements for \$250,000 that was deposited into a special revenue account. It was stated

that DCR will take care of most of the expenses for Draw 7. Councilor-at-Large White inquired about any work that the city will be doing for Draw 7. Mr. Proakis will get back to the committee with a response.

Mr. Bean stated the funds have to be spent as designated in the covenant. Councilor-at-Large Rossetti inquired about the line item for Infiltration & Inflow for \$50,000 and how this seems a bit low for the size of the development. It was acknowledged that our current I&I requirements in zoning are significantly higher, and that the covenant was a “product of its time”.

Councilor Ballantyne inquired about the line item for Blessing of the Bay Boat House for \$100,000 and if this is for upgrade and improvements. She also stated that \$70,000 was budgeted for the last two fiscal years for the boat house and Mr. Proakis should talk to the director of Parks and Recreation on this matter.

Councilor Ballantyne motioned and it was accepted that the Director of Finance and Director of Parks and Recreation advise the City Council on the disposition of funds designated for the boat house and how the recently authorized separate funds were used.

Chair Scott motioned and it was accepted for OSPCD to provide a comprehensive description of infrastructure work performed related to the Assembly Square DIF, including fund usage both on city projects and any reimbursements made for work completed by FRIT.

Councilor-at-Large White suggested Mr. Proakis look at the covenant to see if there are any areas of funding that may not be necessary and consider modifications of the covenant to release those funds for other purposes.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209395: That the Administration provide the timeline for re-paving Highland Avenue, including any planned projects.

Ms. Connor spoke with Mr. Raiche who stated that a written response was submitted previously to the committee members.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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201740: Proposing an ordinance relative to a mid-fiscal year report of municipal finances, with next-fiscal year budget projections.

The Chair spoke to the reason for this item on how to handle budget hearings this year and whether the budget will be addressed as a committee of the whole or just the committee. It was stated the program improvement requests have been received and Mr. Mastrobuoni will be able to present the requests to the committee. The chair stated there are 91 requests so far for \$9.7M and that he anticipates being able to provide a summary of those requests at the next meeting on March 24th. Ms. Connor stated that Mr. Mastrobuoni will have the list of requests, but the Administration will not have had a chance to review and prioritize them before the next meeting on March 24th.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Police Department Grants

209695: Requesting acceptance of a \$200,000 grant with no new match required from the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department to purchase portable radios.

Police Captain Levey stated this funding would provide new portable radios. This is a new request and the judicial point of contact decides every year what the priorities are for SPD.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209697: Requesting acceptance of a \$41,000 grant with no new match required, from the Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department for the EOC upgrades.

Police Captain Levey stated the funding would be used for training purposes and for technological upgrades for the Academy Room at the Police Station.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209698: Requesting acceptance of a \$20,279.78 grant that requires a match, from the Bureau of Justice Assistance Bulletproof Vest Partnership to the Police Department for bulletproof vests.

This request was paired with item 9. Police Captain Levey stated this request is similar to previous requests by SPD. There are 5 new officers graduating from the academy. Each new vest costs approximately \$1,100. Captain Levey stated that officers should have new vests every 5 years and officers can keep their old vest until the end of service life. This is an annual grant which is received in most years.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209780: Requesting a transfer of \$20,279.78 from the Police Public Safety Account to the Grant Match Account to cover the bulletproof vest grant match requirement.

This request was discussed with item 8.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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Mid-year Position Requests

209394: That the Administration comply with #206164, relative to the employment of other counsel to help resolve questions of the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters Committee relative to appointments.

Councilor-at-Large White stated this request has been around for several years. Ms. Connor stated there have been some discussions in the administration, and she will be able to report out at the next meeting on March 24th.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE****209742: Requesting a transfer of \$49,431 from the E-911 Salaries Account to the Department of Transportation Salaries Account, to establish new positions in the Department.**

Items 11 & 12 were discussed together.

Mr. Proakis described this request for a new department as creating a new Department separate from OSPCD to allow greater focus on this area. The request was submitted in an email attached to this item along with three job descriptions. Mr. Proakis stated that the City of Somerville is a member of the NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials) and having this new department would help focus more time and resources, as well as prioritize integrating operations. The new department would also absorb the current staff of the Mobility team. The requested funding would cover salary for the last two months of this fiscal year.

Questions were asked by the committee for the skill sets needed for the DOT. The Mobility department will answer to the new DOT. Additional questions were asked about the size of the NACTO member cities and how they compare to the city of Somerville. Mr. Proakis stated that all other cities are larger than Somerville. Councilor-at-Large White inquired about sizes of some of the smaller cities. Questions were asked if a DOT director was really needed, and what kind of budget is expected for this new department?

There were also procedural questions posed regarding the City Charter and creation of a new Department Head who would require confirmation by the City Council. The committee will anticipate answers from the administration at a future meeting.

Councilor-at-Large Rossetti inquired about space for the new department; it was indicated that the city would need to lease space. Councilor White expressed concern about adding positions mid-year outside of the Budget review process.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE****209743: Requesting a transfer of \$30,000 from the E-911 Salaries Account to Department of Transportation Office Equipment and Professional and Technical Services Accounts.**

Items 11 & 12 were discussed together.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE****209744: Requesting a transfer of \$10,592 from the E-911 Salaries Account to the Constituent Services Salaries Account to establish the position of Quality Assurance and Improvement Manager.**

Mr. Craig discussed the need for this position and indicated that it is for public service overall. He also stated he has been working with the Mobility office since November and found “gaps and opportunities” that may have been handled quicker. Mr. Craig also stated that 311 is no longer just a call center. They handle requests for traffic signals, calming, bike lanes, parking, and flex posts. Additionally, they send out Tweets, go on Facebook, send out large emails that

impact many departments. He also talked about several work orders that had to be re-opened to address the needs of the community.

Councilor White again expressed concern about adding positions mid-year outside of the Budget review process. The committee stated that all of the mid-year requests need further discussion.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Legal Requests

209693: Requesting acceptance of two easements over DCR land in Assembly Square.

Ms. McGettigan stated this request is really a housekeeping item that was agreed to with DCR prior to her employment at Somerville. There are two easements. The city has been using these easements since 2011/2012 and the City needs to formally accept the easements. Mr. Webster from FRIT handed out drawings and stated there is no payment needed from the City on these easements. Ms. McGettigan will also provide written information re: funding prior to the committee meeting. It was stated there were land swaps made of 1.5 acres from DCR to FRTI and 1.8 acres from FRIT to DCR. Councilor-at-Large White asked if the City has the right to declare G Street a public way.

Councilor-at-Large White motioned and it was accepted that the Director of OSPCD provide this Council with the details of the recent approval by the State with regard to the I-Cubed bonds at Assembly Square to FRIT, including the terms of the I-Cubed bond issuance and any changes made from the I-Cubed submission that the Board of Aldermen previously approved.

RESULT:	APPROVED
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209751: Requesting that the subterranean rights below Kensington Avenue and 0 Middlesex Avenue be declared surplus and available for disposition.

Mr. Galligani has been working with a developer called Edge Tech, on the former Assembly Edge site which is near Dunkin Donuts in Assembly Row. The actual address is 845 McGrath Highway. They have been exploring using certain city property for underground parking or geothermal energy generation. A public procurement will be necessary to declare the property surplus, in order to put the underground rights out to bid and allow sale for such a usage.

There was a neighborhood meeting approximately a month ago organized by the Council President for the project. The committee would like for the Ward Councilor be present at the meeting to be a part of the discussion of declaring this property as surplus.

Mr. Galligani is working with engineering to define what is meant by subterranean. It was stated that there may not be a lot of competition for this property as it is exclusively the underground rights for a parcel with only 3 abutters. The RFP for declaring the property surplus may take 2-3 months after receiving the approval, creating the proposal, and reviewing with the committee.

Councilor-at-Large White asked for the proposed value of the property. The item will be held for future discussion and pending the Ward Councilor's input.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Peoples' Budget

209789: That this Council's Committee on Finance discuss the peoples' budget and priorities for FY21.

Chair Scott distributed a document with General Fund Trends from 2012-2019 with a growth of 33.81% over that time. He has been working with Mr. Mastrobuoni who was not able to attend tonight's meeting. The documents are meant to get a sense of where the city has been investing over the last several years. Chair Scott stated the numbers come from Munis year to date report and do not include the school department. The Chair encouraged committee members to begin talking to constituents to broaden engagement in establishing priorities to reshape our city budget, which the Committee hopes to provide to the administration for serious consideration for FY20.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Handouts:

- Maps (with 209693)
- Staffing Request (with 209742, 209743)
- Data (with 209789)