



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 21, 2023

6:30 PM

Committee of the Whole

The meeting took place in the Council Chamber and virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:30 PM by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 8:43 PM.

Others present:

Katjana Ballantyne – Mayor, Nikki Spenser – Chief of Staff, Michael Mastrobuoni – Budget Director, Ed Beab – Director of Finance, Michael Potere – Assistant Clerk of Committees, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

The meeting was recessed at 8:25 PM and reconvened at 8:38 PM

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Jake Wilson, Vice Chair Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Charlotte Kelly, Jesse Clingan, Ben Ewen-Campen, Lance L. Davis, Willie Burnley Jr., Matthew McLaughlin, Judy Pineda Neufeld, Beatriz Gomez Mouakad and Kristen Strezo

1. Review of the FY 2024 Budget

Mayor Ballantyne addressed the committee and thanked the members for their diligence in dealing with the FY24 budget. She spoke briefly about the Winter Hill Community Innovation School and said that she hopes that dedicated staff for the school is approved in this budget, adding that the support of the City Council is necessary to move forward in addressing this challenge. Options for fall class space were examined and the best option is to relocate students to the Edgerly and Capuano Schools. Next steps are being identified every day and information gathering continues.

The Mayor stated that the FY24 budget will build to scale, not as a combination of individual budgets, but rather as a concerted effort working towards the common goal of meeting the demands of the community. She commented that public feedback is appreciated and that this budget charts a path to a better Somerville.

Councilor Ewen-Campen commented that there's much work to be done this summer for the WHCIS and that the funding will come from the stabilization fund. Councilor Burnley asked if the Administration is adding \$1.5 million for an alternative response program. Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked for wage theft protection, saying that it's time for city to do better.

2. Councilor Kelly moved to reduce line 0112151 of the Executive Office - Administration Personal Services budget to \$0.

Councilor Kelly amended her motion to read as follows:

Reduce line 01-12151 of Administration Executive Office Personal Services by \$81,670 in account number 511000, to eliminate the position of Deputy Chief Administrative Officer.

Several councilors expressed support for this motion, particularly since the position of Chief Administrative Officer was just established in the past few months and because of the need to fund other critical items.

Chief of Staff Nikki Spencer, speaking on behalf of Chief Administrator Officer Lammis Vargas, said that the city has a lot of capacity for improvement and the new Deputy position would be helpful in achieving the goals that have been set by acting as the point person for a number of matters, e.g., collective bargaining, communications, department planning, etc.. Chief Spencer, speaking for the Administration, said that this new position is needed.

The motion was approved on a voice vote.

3. Councilor Kelly moved to reduce line 0112152 of the Executive Office - Administration Ordinary Maintenance budget to \$0.

This item was tabled.

Resolution by Councilor Burnley

That the Administration add \$1.5 million to the FY-24 budget for an alternative response program.

Councilor McLaughlin asked how the \$1.5 million figure was calculated and Councilor Kelly provided a breakdown of a similar request she made in March that included funding for design of the program, staffing for 1 year, several responder positions, mediation services, rent for physical space, and miscellaneous costs.

Councilor Gomez-Mouakad noted that the city is about to implement a safe injection site and thinks that more needs to be done with regard to an alternative response program and feels that the city isn't ready for this right now. Councilor Davis would like to see more of a commitment in this budget and thinks that more steps should be taken towards an alternative response program.

Councilor Scott stated that he has a hard time when contingencies aren't planned for. He pointed out that this budget has several new positions with an average yearly salary of \$80,000. He believes that the front line needs of the city aren't being addressed and he said that some of these new positions amount to micro-management jobs. Councilor Clingan said some of the positions could be valid, but it's difficult to look at 40 new positions while having 100+ vacant union positions. Councilor McLaughlin commented

that he is struggling to understand what's being discussed and he asked that the "budget cuts" move on. Chair Wilson stated his preference to proceed in a more free-form manner, rather than doing a page by page review of each department. Councilor Ewen-Campen stated that he's not convinced that cutting a bunch of positions is worth supporting. The motion was approved on a voice vote.

Resolution by Councilor Wilson

That the Administration increase funding for line 51-511000 to hire a planner in the Planning Department.

(The motion was laid on the table in order to vote on the next motion.)

(The motion was put before the committee.)

The motion was approved on a voice vote.

Resolution by Councilor Davis

That the Administration increase funding by \$86,151 for line 51-511000 for a Planner position dedicated to the City Council and assigned to the City Clerk's Office.

Councilor McLaughlin noted that it's been difficult to hold Land Use meetings due to the lack of Planning staff. Councilor Davis stated that this position is needed and would provide the City Council with a better ability to impact changes in planning and zoning.

The motion was approved on a voice vote.

Resolution by Councilor Gomez Mouakad

That the Administration add \$86,594.57 to the Personal Services line in the Economic Development Department to fund a Program Manager for Prevailing Wage, Living Wage, and Wage Theft Ordinance Oversight under a Workforce Development Department/Division.

The motion was approved on a voice vote.

Resolution by Councilor Clingan

Reduce line 01-29151 in the Department of Emergency Management Personal Services by \$56,695 in account number 511000 to eliminate the position of Deputy Director of Emergency Management.

Chief of Staff Nikki Spenser spoke in support of the position saying that this is about the city having plans for a myriad of possible incidents. She noted that the Director of this department left in March and that this would add to the city's capacity and allow the city to be pro-active rather than reactive.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld commented that these type positions tend to have a high burnout rate and noted that several orders/resolutions have been

submitted by the City Council for better emergency planning. Councilor Ewen-Campen doesn't support this cut and believes that it's an investment worth making.

The motion failed on a roll call vote with 5 votes in favor (Councilors Davis, Burnley, Clingan, Kelly and Scott), 6 votes against (Councilors McLaughlin, Gomez Mouakad, Strezo, Pineda Neufeld, Ewen-Campen and Wilson), and none absent.

Resolution by Councilor Kelly

That the Administration allocate \$57,000 to line 01-19052 in professional and technical services account number 530000 for the purpose of contracted legal services for tenants

The motion was approved on a voice vote.

Resolution by Councilor Burnley

That the Administration allocate all available free cash (\$82,715) to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

The motion was approved on a voice vote.

Total cuts made to FY-24 budget

Executive Administration - Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Line # 12151 Cut \$81,670.00

Budget Related Items

- 4. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0857](#)) Requesting revocation of the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53F 1/2 of the Massachusetts General Laws, ceasing the Veterans Memorial Ice Rink as an Enterprise Fund, effective fiscal year 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

- 5. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0904](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$248,419.50 from the Facility Renovation Stabilization Fund for continuing building design services.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

- 6. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0906](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$817,137.42 from the Facility Renovation Stabilization Fund for continuing building design services.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

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7. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0907](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$151,252.50 from the Street Reconstruction Stabilization Fund for continuing street, sidewalk, and pavement condition assessment and design services.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
8. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0908](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$69,184.64 from the Facility Renovation Stabilization Fund for continuing asset management program and planning services.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
9. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0924](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$319,923,766 to fund the FY 2024 General Fund Operating Budget.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
10. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0926](#)) Requesting the rescission of \$13,232,471 of authorized but un-issued borrowings.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
11. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0927](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$2,383,367 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Rainy Day Stabilization Fund.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
12. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0928](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$2,000,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Salary & Wage Stabilization Fund.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
13. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0929](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,000,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Compensated Absence Liability Fund.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
14. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0931](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$4,676,448 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Street Reconstruction and Renovation Stabilization Fund to support the FY 2023 5-Year Capital Investment Plan.
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| | RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION</u> |
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| 15. | Mayor's Request
(ID # 23-0932) | Requesting approval of the expenditure limitations for departmental Revolving Funds for FY 2024. |
| | RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION</u> |
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| 16. | Mayor's Request
(ID # 23-0934) | Requesting the appropriation or reserve of \$3,283,713 in estimated FY 2024 Community Preservation Act (CPA) revenue for CPA projects and expenses. |
| | RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION</u> |
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| 17. | Mayor's Request
(ID # 23-0935) | Requesting the appropriation of \$638,218 to fund the FY 2024 Kennedy School Pool Enterprise Fund budget. |
| | RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION</u> |
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| 18. | Mayor's Request
(ID # 23-0936) | Requesting the appropriation of \$221,481 from the Kennedy School Pool Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings Account to the FY 2024 Kennedy School Pool Enterprise Fund budget. |
| | RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION</u> |
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| 19. | Mayor's Request
(ID # 23-0938) | Requesting the appropriation of \$40,000 from the Dilboy Field Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings Account to the FY 2024 Dilboy Field Enterprise Fund budget. |
| | RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION</u> |
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| 20. | Mayor's Request
(ID # 23-0939) | Requesting the appropriation of \$1,600,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Sewer Stabilization Fund to support the Water-Sewer Capital Investment Plan. |
| | RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION</u> |
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| 21. | Mayor's Request
(ID # 23-0941) | Requesting the appropriation of \$400,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Water Stabilization Fund to support the Water-Sewer Capital Investment Plan. |
| | RESULT: | <u>RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION</u> |
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22. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0942](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,636,836 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Parks Stabilization Fund to support the FY 2023 5-Year Capital Investment Plan.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
23. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0943](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$5,890,276 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Capital Projects Stabilization Fund to support the FY 2023 5-Year Capital Investment Plan.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
24. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0945](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$271,200 to fund the FY 2024 Dilboy Fields Enterprise Fund budget.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
25. Officer's Communication (ID # [23-0946](#)) Superintendent of Schools conveying the School Department budget, approved by the School Committee's Finance and Facilities Subcommittee, meeting as a Committee of the Whole on May 16, 2023.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
26. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0948](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$33,863,918 to fund the FY 2024 Sewer Enterprise Fund budget.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
27. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0949](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$18,996,902 to fund the FY 2024 Water Enterprise Fund budget.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
28. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0966](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$259,382 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Energy Stabilization Fund for projects that reduce carbon emissions and energy costs.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
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29. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0967](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$500,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Open Space Acquisition Stabilization Fund to acquire new publicly accessible open space.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
30. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0968](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$3,000,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to support flexible rental assistance programs.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
31. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0969](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,500,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB) Trust Fund.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
32. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0971](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$170,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Capital Stabilization Fund for additional monies for site preparation, construction, and furnishing of a safe consumption site.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
33. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0973](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$300,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to fund the Emergency Response Stabilization Fund.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
34. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0974](#)) Requesting approval to create the Emergency Response Stabilization Fund for maintaining, distributing, and providing food, temporary shelter, and other common necessities of life for residents displaced by public exigency, emergency, or distress, as codified in the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 19.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
35. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0980](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$1,750,036 from the Salary Contingency Account-Salaries to the Salary & Wage Stabilization Fund.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**
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36. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0982](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,300,000 from the Sewer Enterprise Retained Earnings Account to the Sewer Capital Stabilization Fund to build reserves for the Water-Sewer Capital Improvement Program.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION
37. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0983](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$200,000 from the Water Enterprise Retained Earnings Account to the Water Stabilization Fund to support the Water-Sewer Capital Investment Plan.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION
38. Officer's Communication (ID # [23-0824](#)) City Clerk submitting recommendations for adjustments to certain fees charged by the City Clerk's Office, effective July 1, 2023.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

Non-budgetary Items

39. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0852](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$550 from the Engineering Personal Services Account to the Infrastructure & Asset Management (IAM) Personal Services Account to fund IAM Somerville Municipal Employees Association (SMEA) staff holiday and longevity pay.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION
40. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0853](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$25,000 from the Parks and Recreation Professional & Technical Services Account to the Parks & Recreation Salaries & Wages Temp Account for school staff coaching of intramural sports.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION
41. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0854](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$18,000 from the Parks & Recreation Fields Personal Services Account to the Parks & Recreation Rec/Youth Program Personal Services Account to cover the remainder of the fiscal year for teen spaces.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

42. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0878](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$248,419.50 from the Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM)-Capital Projects Engineering & Architecture Account to the Facility Renovation Stabilization Fund for continuing building design services.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

43. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0879](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$817,137.42 from the Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM)-Capital Projects Professional & Technical Account to the Facility Renovation Stabilization Fund for continuing building design services.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

44. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0880](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$151,252.50 from the Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM)-Engineering & Architecture Account to the Street Reconstruction Stabilization Fund for continuing street, sidewalk, and pavement condition assessment and design services.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

45. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0881](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$69,184.64 from the Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM) Professional & Technical Account to the Facility Renovation Stabilization Fund for continuing asset management program and planning services.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

46. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0975](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$12,800 from the Unemployment Compensation Account to the Recreation/Youth Program Salaries & Wages Temporary Account to provide additional staff support for the displaced Winter Hill Community Innovation School students.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

DPW Invoices

47. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0877](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$3,592.59 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Buildings Elevator R&M Account for elevator service.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

48. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0903](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$646.08 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Buildings Plumbing R&M Account for asbestos sampling.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION
49. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0952](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$20,284.55 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Hazardous Waste Removal Account for removal services.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION
50. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0953](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$1,042.75 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Buildings Fire Alarm R&M Account for fire extinguisher maintenance services.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION
51. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0954](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$800 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Rubbish Removal Account for removal of concrete debris.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION
52. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0955](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$2,536.63 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Buildings Natural Gas Account for gas in city buildings.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

Other Items

53. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0829](#)) Requesting approval to execute the Second Amendment to the lease agreement with Dana Family Series, LLC, for the Grove Street parking lot, through June 30, 2024.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2023-06-21 EM Advisors_Somerville Invoice01_06172023 Redacted
- Finance - 2023-06-21 Deputy Director of Emergency Management _DRAFT-JD
- Finance - 2023-06-21 WHCIS Timeline
- Finance - 2023-06-21 StockPotMalden-InvoiceSomervilleEmergRespWinterHill
- Finance - 2023-06-21 FY-24 Budget Comments

