



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wheeler at 6:04 pm and adjourned at 9:43 pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Link, Srezo, Hardt, Scott, and Wheeler), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Others present: Sarah Anders- Chief of Staff, Kimberly Wells - Chief Administrative Officer, Amanda Nagim-Williams - Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Courtney Henderson – City Clerk, Cindy Amara – City Attorney, Ed Bean – Finance Director, Michael Mastruboni – Budget Director, Treasurer Linda Dubuque, Kate Hartke – Grants and External Funds Director, Frank Golden – Chief Assessor, Janneke Donovan De-Klerk – Deputy Assessor, Lisa Gallagher Noonan – Manager of Accounts Payable, Angela Allen – Chief Procurement Officer, Steve Craig – Director of Constituent Services, Gabriela Portillo-Perez – Deputy Director of Constituent Services, Nick Salerno – Elections Commissioner, Catherine Nakaton – Director of Equity and Belonging, Anne Gill – Director of Human Resources, Kristen Hill – Recruitment and Retention Manager, Jessica Pavao – Deputy Director of Human Resources, Anna Gartsman – Director of SomerStat, David Goodridge – Chief Information Officer, Madalyn Letellier – Assistant City Clerk, Legislative Services.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jon Link, City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo, Ward Seven City Councilor Emily Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott and City Councilor At Large Ben Wheeler

Review of the Fiscal FY 2027 Budget

- Executive Administration
- City Council
- Law
- City Clerk
- Licensing Commission

- **Executive Administration**

Sarah Anders, Chief of Staff (COS), Kimerly Wells, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Amanda Nagim-Williams, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA), were present to discuss the department. COS Anders discussed the goals of the Mayor’s Office and the new structure within the office to engage more community partners and respond better to constituent needs. Councilor Scott asked if the Digital Innovation Officer that was removed from the budget was ever advertised or hired. CAO Wells stated an item was in front of the Council in January that approved repurposing those funds to hire the two new community liaisons in the office. Councilor Scott asked what the difference in job roles and deliverables are for two Police positions. COS Anders responded that the Public Safety For All Program Manager has been with the city for six months to engage in a community process to implement recommendations that were released in the study. The

Police Accountability Program Director will be the one to oversee and implement the changes.

Councilor Strezo asked about the reduction in the budget for badges, emblems, and trophies and what the new administration will use this line for. COS Anders stated the line will be used for plaques, portraits, or celebratory trophies as needed, she did not provide comment on what previous administrations spent in the line.

- **City Council**

City Clerk, Courney Henderson, spoke to the City Council budget, and that it encompasses the salaries of the Councilors and their support staff to ensure the body can carry out their legislative duties. Councilor Link asked what previous dues and memberships were in the previous budget. Budget Director Mastrobuoni stated this was a misallocation in last year's budget and it has been corrected moving forward.

- **City Clerk**

City Clerk, Courtney Henderson, shared her office provides essential day to day services to the public in the form of business licenses and vital records as well as providing support to the Council. City Clerk Henderson spoke to the recent loss of the Assistant City Clerk of Vital Services and the work being done to maintain service levels and workload within the office. In response to a question on the organization structure of the office from Councilor Soctt Clerk Henderson clarified the office is now operating with one Assistant City Clerk where the role had previously been split into two positions. Councilor Hardt asked where additional part time positions are paid out of, Director Mastrobuoni stated part time non benefited positions are not listed in the budget, the addition of a Committee Clerk would be paid out as part of salaries and temp lines. Councilor Strezo asked about the ability to disincentivize the use of credit cards to reduce convenience fees in the future.

In response to Councilor Link Clerk Henderson shared vital records are responded to and processed within the same day. Licenses follow a longer approval post City Council meeting and are issued the same day they are approved by the Mayor. Service will continue to be maintained regardless of the reduction in staff. Councilor Link expressed a desire to consider the number of part time roles within the department over the decision to hire a full time employee who is benefit eligible.

- **Law**

Councilor Link asked a follow-up to the previously submitted question about the function of the Legal Services line in Ordinary Maintenance and how the budgeted amount was reached. City Attorney Amara spoke to what services are anticipated and ensured that if litigation comes along the funds will be available. Councilor Scott asked about the previous year's goal to work on the implementation of the City Charter to which City Attorney does believe the goal to be completed as the Charter has since passed. Councilor

Scott asked if a vote was taken by the School Committee prior to the presentation and submission of the budget on June 4th and if the City Council is following the language in the Charter. City Attorney Amara shared an opinion was sent to the Councilor earlier in the afternoon and the office is of the opinion that there is nothing preventing the budget from moving forward at this time.

- **Licensing Commission**

City Clerk Henderson spoke to the budget supporting the salaries of the three commissioners who review the applicants on behalf of the city. Councilor Strezo pointed to the lack of pay increase to the Commissioners despite an increased workload over recent years. In response to comments from Councilor Strezo Budget Director Mastrobuoni shared many boards and commissions have various requirements that were used in a recent compensation study to determine any adjustments in pay.

Councilor Strezo made a motion *that the collective salaries of Licensing Commissioners be increased to \$15,180 with the Chair receiving \$5,180 and Licensing Commissioners 2 and 3 receiving \$5,000 each annually.*

The motion was laid on the table until the June 23, 2026 Finance Committee of the Whole meeting.

- Finance

- Auditing
- Grants
- Assessing
- Treasurer/ Collector
- Procurement & Contracting Services
- Enterprise Funds
- Salary Contingency
- PAYGO
- Debt Service
- Unemployment Compensation
- Pension
- State Assessments

- **Finance**

No additional questions were asked during the meeting.

- **Auditing**

Director Bean spoke through the changes outlined in the budget book. There is one vacancy due to an internal staff promotion and hiring is underway to fill the position. Auditing serves the budget development, accounting, and accounts payable by auditing all invoices that come up through the city. Councilor Scott asked about Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) payments, Treasurer Linda Dubuque shared it is a multiple department project and roll out of a web based access for vendors to their information stored in the cities MUNIS database. Registered vendors can maintain their information

electronically through this system. Manager of Accounts Payable Lisa Gallagher shared the city is up to 24% of EFTs.

Grants

Grants and External Funds Director, Kate Hartke, shared the division is focused on identifying grant proposals and funds to augment the city's budget and works closely with numerous city departments. The division also works to administer funds throughout the city and provide training and assistance on pre and post awards. Major changes to the budget include a request for additional staff due to medical leave and a reduction in the Ordinary Maintenance in response to a request from the Administration to reduce budgets by 5%.

Councilor Scott asked about the removal of a Grant Administrator position, Director Hartke clarified the position was filled when it was removed. Councilor Scott asked why manager roles do not have direct staff reports, Director Harke responded that the Deputy Director role is able to take over the functions and duties of the Director should they need. Director Hartke elaborated on the complexities of the role and its focus on the pre-award portion of work with city departments. Councilor Wheeler asked if hiring an additional person on staff could pay for itself, Director Hartke said that question has been asked in the past, but that model has not been completely explored within the city.

Assessing

Councilor Wheeler asked what steps the office takes to ensure equality in assessments. Assessor Golden stated the lower value properties are selling more rapidly and the appreciation is growing. It is hard to make comparisons across the city and so keeping track of and viewing trends, use, permits, and conditions when creating assessments is important. Councilor Link asked about empty lab space in the city and if the assessed value could go down. In response Assessor Golden shared the value has been decreasing in the last two years, they are appraised twice a year by an outside company to ensure the city remains in good standing.

Treasurer/ Collector

Chief Treasurer Linda Dubuque shared the office is responsible for municipal financial operations, for safeguarding public funds, managing cash flow, and overseeing debt. Councilor Scott asked about the status of the Municipal Scholarship Fund. In response it sits at about \$90,000 and around 11 \$2,000 scholarships will be delivered to students. She shared members are going to be looking into different avenues to increase revenue for the fund in the fall.

Procurement & Contracting Services

No additional questions were asked during the meeting.

Enterprise Funds

Budget Director Mastrubuoni shared this conversation would be better suited on a future budget night.

Salary Contingency

No additional questions were asked during the meeting.

PAYGO

Councilor Link asked how long the lease was for the Tufts Administration Building (TAB) Building, Budget Director Mastrubuoni stated the city is currently in year two of a five year lease that houses multiple city departments.

Debt Service

No additional questions were asked during the meeting.

Unemployment Compensation

Councilor Wheeler asked what the insurance policy is on unemployment compensation. Budget Director Mastrubuoni stated the city is responsible for certain portion for employees, so the team projects out on that and is responsible for the cost. In response to Councilor Link Budget Director further clarified costs are capped at a certain amount each week and the budgeted amount is the cost of payments through the state system.

Pension

Budget Director Mastrubuoni shared information from the Retirement Board that the current unfunded actuarial liability as of January 1, 2025, was \$114,616,000 and the city is on pace to fund that in 2033.

State Assessments

Councilor Wheeler asked why the State Assessments are not part of the General Fund. Budget Director Mastrubuoni stated these are not funds to be appropriated by the City Council, they are state level costs. Councilor Hardt asked about school choice and why the budget is half of the actual for the current fiscal year. Budget Director stated the estimates are determined by the state but can change very quickly, the amount proposed is off the Senate Budget at this time.

- Operations and Systems
 - Admin
 - Constituent Services
 - Elections
 - Equity & Belonging (former RSJ)
 - People Operations (former Human Resources)
 - SomerStat
 - Technology & Innovation

- **Operations and Systems**

Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), Kimberly Wells, introduced this new division aimed to solidify the role of the CAO. Focused on implementing the operations policies, enhancing growth, and advance city wide innovation to conduct more delivery to meet the needs of staff internally and of the constituents they serve. The divisions below who will be heard from report to the CAO. CAO Wells spoke to the organizational chart and the decision to embed the City Clerk, Licensing Commission, and the Law Department into the reporting structure so they can be a part of decision making conversations but do not report to the CAO.

Admin

No additional questions were asked during the meeting.

Constituent Services

Councilor Scott asked for clarification on the Systems Administrator position that is no longer in the budget and if it was filled at the time it was eliminated, Director Craig responded it was filled at the time the position was eliminated from the budget. In response to more questions from Councilor Scott Director Craig shared that since 2021 there has been growth year over year from 1,000-5,000 requests being seen within the division. Councilor Scott asked about the ratio of manager and directors within the department. Director Craig spoke to the expanded hours, 24 hour availability service, and the need for supervisors to be present outside of city hall business hours. The Services Operation Manger does not oversee people directly but rather the portfolio of interdepartmental work. Councilor Link asked what the 311 after hours contract is covering. Director Craig shared this line is for telephone, it has been found the telephone is the lowest barrier of entry for constituents. There is a significant reduction in calls on weekends, overnights, and holidays, to reach those constituents on off hours the contractor receives the call and can add in the ticket and ensure it gets routed to the appropriate departments.

Elections

Councilor Link inquired about the push for early voting and mail in voting and the logistics for responding to such. Commissioner Salerno shared the city utilizes state computers in their officers and there are plenty of checks and balances that exist. Commissioner Salerno spoke to the extra security precautions taken for mail in voting with the inclusion of ten drop boxes that the city has and getting emptied every day. Councilor Scott asked about the verification of signatures for petitioners and the average turn around, Commissioner Salerno said they are processed in the order they come in and it can be variant upon what else is happening in the office, but every effort is made to certify within a timely manner. Councilor Hardt asked about staffing for poll workers. Commissioner Salerno sad the filling of those positions is always difficult, and it is a constant effort to maintain.

Equity & Belonging (former RSJ)

Director Catherin Nakato spoke to the transition in the work of equity to be included in all departments across the city. The proposed department is to ensure that the work of equity is centered and evolves in how the work is carried out. What will be changing is some duties are being shifted to other departments that can better support their work. Councilor Scott asked about funds that had been allocated to RSJ in previous budget and where the administering of funds will come through. Director Nakato stated the RSJ fund will still be under Equity & Belonging. Councilor Link asked what performance metrics will be used to ensure decisions are data driven and the reorganization is effective in the ways desired. Director Nakato shared there is information that can be brought back to the Councilor and the work is ongoing. Councilor Wheeler shared there has been a desire for more involvement in schools with the LGBTQ Coordinator and asked if there are opportunities to connect with schools. Director Nakato stated there is opportunity to meet those needs through partnership with other services the city has and Equity & Belonging sits at the seat where policy and process decisions could be made.

People Operations (former Human Resources)

Councilor Scott asked about the consolidation of the HR Manager and Benefits Manager Position within the budget. Director Gill clarified one position was vacated prior to the submission of this year's budget.

SomerStat

Councilor Scott asked how the mission and charge have changed after the reorganization. Director Gartsman shared her experience over the last four years when the team began as one person and the department has worked to systemize program evaluations. As a result of the innovative culture of the city, it became clear the in-house position is vital to maintain the standardization of program evaluations and institution knowledge rather than returning to an ad hoc process and losing information sharing. In response to Councilor Link, Director Gartsman stated all data processing is done in house and that can be reflected in salaries. The technology team supports the work with servers to run and can speak more generally to costs. Stationery costs are attributed to the printing and the mailing of the Happiness Survey and the return postage.

Technology & Innovation

Councilor Scott asked about the year-to-date (YTD) spend on the software maintenance line. Chief Innovation Officer (CIO) David Goodridge said there are some items that have not come through yet and there is future planning so the department can bring forth a better aligned budget. In response to Councilor Wheeler CIO Goodridge stated a change in computer equipment costs due to the five year lease on network equipment being fully paid off at market value. Councilor Link asked about depreciating values and if there are any future anticipated costs. CIO Goodridge stated the network infrastructure does not have an end of life and all hardware in the

city is up to date and functioning for optimal utilization.