



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, December 10, 2024

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:00pm and adjourned at 8:50pm with a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Clingan, Burnley, Sait, Scott, Wilson), none opposed, and none absent.

Others present: Garret Anderson – Residential Decarbonization Program Manager, Shumeane Benford – Chief of the Somerville Police Department, Anthony Delmonaco – Director of Finance and Administration at the Somerville Police Department, Alan Inacio – Director of Finance and Administration Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, Jill Lathan – Commissioner of Department of Public Works, Julie Spurr-Knight – Finance Director of Department of Public Works, Rachel Nadkarni – Director of Economic Development at OSPCD, Neha Singh – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Ashley Speliotis – Director of the Somerville Council on Aging, Mohammed Uddin – Financial Analyst, Natasha Frazier – Assistant Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Naima Sait, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-1540](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of October 22, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

Public Hearings

2. Officer's Communication (ID # [24-1691](#)) Director of Economic Development and Director of the Arts Council requesting that this Council's Finance Committee hold a public hearing on the draft Armory Master Plan.

Director Nadkarni gave a presentation that provided an overview of the draft Somerville Armory Master Plan. The presentation is included as an attachment to this meeting. Chair Wilson opened the public hearing at 6:19pm. Nearly thirty members of the public testified, including artists, neighbors, community members who attend events at the Armory, business owners, and employees at the Armory. One of the primary concerns expressed was the uncertainty that current Armory tenants face regarding the future status of their occupancy due to the

lack of a long-term lease. In addition to the lack of a lease, several people raised concerns about the affordability of a future lease to current tenants. Multiple people expressed that this is challenging to the Armory’s ongoing operations because they rely on booking events well into the future. The Booking Coordinator at the Armory stated they are receiving booking inquiries into 2026 and 2027.

Additionally, several people expressed the view that the draft Master Plan is starting from scratch. Several people encouraged the City to include tenants in the planning process and to look to the success of the Center for the Arts independent nonprofit model that is currently in existence rather than create a new governance model for the Armory. One member of the public spoke in support of the draft Master Plan and forming a new governance model. Throughout the hearing, many people commented on the culturally diverse and enriching programming offered at the Armory and the positive impact on the Somerville community.

Chair Wilson closed the public hearing at 7:15pm. The City Council accepts public comments at publiccomments@somervillema.gov

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Communications and Discussions

- 3. Mayor's Communication (ID # [24-1580](#))

Conveying the draft Armory Master Plan.

Councilor Sait stated that she looks forward to continuing to receive community input and that she encourages the Administration to work closely with stakeholders. Councilor Burnley stated that he appreciates how the draft Master Plan highlights long-term physical issues of the building that the City needs to address to ensure the long-term stability of the Armory. He also expressed support for a 3-year lease, noting that it would offer stability. He also expressed support for an independent governance model, noting that there has been a resounding desire from the community for this over the course of many meetings. Councilor Scott stated that it feels like the draft Master Plan is reinventing the wheel. He expressed his support for addressing the maintenance issues in the building and for stewarding the arts. He also raised the idea of subsidizing the Armory through an enterprise model. Councilor Clingan expressed his support for getting a lease in place because it appears the forthcoming process will be lengthy.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Prior Year Invoices

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1543](#)) Requesting approval to pay a prior year invoice totaling \$5,730 using available funds in the Law Department's Legal Services Account for outside legal counsel services.
- Councilor Wilson noted that a memo was received for this item, which is included as an attachment to this meeting.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
5. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1572](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$2,569.52 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Buildings HVAC R&M Account for HVAC repair services.
- Agenda items 5 through 10 were taken up together. Regarding agenda item 10, ID number 24-1562, Director Spurr Knight stated that this dates back to 2021, in which DPW looked at all 70 accounts and identified 13 accounts that need to be reconciled. She stated that they are working to clean up all accounts that are carrying balances forward and aim to move to a master billing process.
- Regarding agenda item 8, ID number 24-1569, Director Spurr Knight stated that DPW is working with OSC to come up with a reconciliation process for the solar invoices. At present, they are receiving solar bills several months apart. They are working to reduce the number of prior year bills next year.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
6. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1571](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$2,682 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Buildings Rental Equipment Account for equipment rental services.
- This item was taken up with agenda item 5, ID number 24-1572. Please refer to that item for the minutes.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
7. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1570](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$1,710 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Sanitation Benches & Barrels Account for Big Belly containers.
- This item was taken up with agenda item 5, ID number 24-1572. Please refer to that item for the minutes.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

8. Mayor's Request
 (ID # [24-1569](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$35,917.36 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Electricity Account for solar generation services.

This item was taken up with agenda item 5, ID number 24-1572. Please refer to that item for the minutes.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

9. Mayor's Request
 (ID # [24-1566](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$7,539.86 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Electricity Account for solar generation services.

This item was taken up with agenda item 5, ID number 24-1572. Please refer to that item for the minutes.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

10. Mayor's Request
 (ID # [24-1562](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$38,803.02 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Natural Gas Account for natural gas delivery services.

This item was taken up with agenda item 5, ID number 24-1572. Please refer to that item for the minutes.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

11. Mayor's Request
 (ID # [24-1654](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$29,074.72 using available funds in various Police Department Ordinary Maintenance Accounts for unpaid invoices.

Director Delmonaco stated that these invoices include PPE, office supplies, an overdue drinking water invoice, training, and cleaning and sanitation expenses. He stated that the finance unit at SPD has been understaffed, which resulted in stalled payment processing and took extra time to verify. Director Delmonaco stated that he is working to hire and train new staff and

implementing checks and balances to prevent this from happening again.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

Grant and Gift Acceptances

- 12. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1260](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$171,000 grant with no new match required, from the Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department for a Special Response Team rescue vehicle.

Chief Benford stated that the Special Response Team's current vehicle is eight years old and that the replacement vehicle adds additional safety measures because it is armored. He stated that it resembles an oversized passenger van and does not appear militarized. Chief Benford also stated that it would support Somerville and the region more broadly. He also described the situations in which this vehicle would be needed for its safety features.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

- 13. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1635](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$82,357.50 grant with no new match required from Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs to the Council on Aging for social, educational and physical wellness programming.

Director Speliotis stated that this is the first installment for FY25 and that it would be used to help subsidize programs for seniors, such as free exercise programs, educational, and social programming. She described an upcoming event in which seniors will pay \$3 for a nutrition class, in which they will make charcuterie boards, rather than the \$25 full-price cost to participate.

Councilor Scott asked about a reduction in ride services for seniors and there was a discussion regarding exactly what the recent change was and funding possibilities to restore the services to their previous offerings.

Following discussion of this item, the Committee meeting was on recess from 8:10 to 8:15pm.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

- 14. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1491](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$500,000 grant with no new match required, from MA Department of Conservation and Recreation to the Public Space and Urban Forestry Division for the Blessing of the Bay MassTrails improvement project.
 Director Inacio stated that this will add .6 acres of additional trail path, open space, and heat island mitigation improvements. He stated this will be done in collaboration with DCR and the Mystic River Watershed Association. He noted that it is also being supported through Community Preservation Act funds and that the project is in the design phase. Several councilors expressed their enthusiasm for this project.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

Contracts and Easements

- 15. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1547](#)) Requesting approval of a time-only contract extension for Symmes Maini & McKee Associates, Inc. for design services for the Somerville High School project.
 Items 15, 16, 17 were taken up together. Chair Wilson stated that a memo was received for these three high school building project related items. The memo is included as an attachment to this meeting. He stated that items 15 and 16 pertain to warranty work and that item 17 is wrap-up with MSBA.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

- 16. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1546](#)) Requesting approval of a time-only contract extension for Suffolk Construction, for Construction Manager services for the Somerville High School project.
 This item was taken up with agenda item 15, ID number 24-1547. Please refer to that item for the minutes.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

- 17. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1545](#)) Requesting approval of a time-only contract extension of three years for PMA, LLC for Owner's Project Manager services for the Somerville High School project.
 This item was taken up with agenda item 15, ID number 24-1547. Please refer to that item for the minutes.
RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

Appropriations

- 18. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1574](#)) Requesting approval to appropriate \$147,902 from the Energy Stabilization Fund to replace steam traps.

Manager Anderson stated that this is one project in a series of projects dating back to at least 2019 that fund various energy conservation measures and buildings across the city. There was brief discussion regarding this project paying for itself, and Manager Anderson stated that the value of the project is reflected in the contract, in which approximately 30% of the project is not coming from Somerville funds due to the utility incentive.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

- 19. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1573](#)) Requesting approval of the use of available funds in the amount of \$60,000 from the Department of Public Works Highway Wages Account to fund the Lets Get Working Program.

Commissioner Lathan described the Lets Get Working Program, which provides paid internships at DPW to juniors and seniors in high school who have completed their school's CTE program and have been determined to be eligible by their school. She stated that this helps to fulfill their graduation requirements for an internship or practicum. Several councilors expressed their support for this program.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

- 20. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1649](#)) Requesting approval to appropriate \$340,000 from the Union Square Community Benefits Fund, with \$200,000 for Workforce Development Services and \$140,000 for Small Business Technical Assistance Services.

Director Inacio stated that this is the final appropriation of funds that were contributed from the Union Square redevelopment and that the workforce and small business assistance have been funded in the past. Director Inacio confirmed that these would be Community Benefits Funds and not linkage fees.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

Transfers

- 21. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-1550](#)) Requesting the transfer of \$5,425 from the Human Resources Professional & Technical Services Account to the Law Professional & Technical Services Account for invoices for the physician on the Medical Panel Review Board.

Chair Wilson shared that a memo was received from the Law Department, which is included as an attachment to this item.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

Orders and Resolutions

- 22. Order (ID # [24-1684](#)) By Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Scott That the Director of Grants and External Funds explain to this Council in writing whether the city can apply for a grant through the Advanced Transportation Technologies and Innovation (ATTAIN) Program to fund a North-South microtransit pilot program, and apply if it is possible.

Councilor Burnley stated that the City is not expecting funding by the next fiscal year. He stated that he hopes the City can utilize this federal funding in the future and explained some of the selection criteria. He described why he supports a microtransit pilot program, noting the challenges that elderly residents and people with disabilities face traversing Somerville due to physical barriers in the city. He stated that he would like to see Somerville support these community members in the absence of support from the State or MBTA. There was discussion among councilors regarding the challenges of finding drivers for shuttle buses

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Ordinances

- 23. Ordinance (ID # [23-0827](#)) By Councilor Scott and Councilor Wilson Amending Section 2-323 of the Code of Ordinances, Salary Ranges, to provide cost-of-living adjustments for School Committee Members and City Councilors.

Director Singh shared that the Administration plans to share an updated Non-Union Compensation Plan in January 2025 that includes elected officials. There was discussion among councilors regarding COLA increases. Chair Wilson noted that the last COLA increase for City Councilors was in 2016 and for School Committee Members was in 2017. Councilor Scott noted that this item proposed a one-time COLA increase.

There was discussion of the possibility of automatic COLA increases in the future. Councilor Burnley expressed his support for a living wage.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2024-12-10 Law Memo (with 24-1543, 24-1550)
- Finance - 2024-12-10 Memo ATTAIN Grant (with 24-1684)
- Finance - 2024-12-10 IAM Memo (with 24-1545, 24-1546, 24-1547)
- Finance 2024-12-10 Public Comments (with 24-1691)
- Finance - 2024-12-10 Somerville Armory Master Plan - Draft Plan Presentation (with 24-1580)