



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 21, 2017
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Tony Lafuente	Chair	Present	
Maryann M. Heuston	Vice Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven Alderman	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One Alderman	Present	
William A. White Jr.	Alderman At Large	Present	
Robert J. McWatters	Ward Three Alderman	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five Alderman	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six Alderman	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	Alderman at Large	Present	
John M. Connolly	Alderman At Large	Present	
Dennis M. Sullivan	Alderman At Large	Present	

Others present: All department heads, Joe Curtatone - Mayor, Michael Mastrobuoni - Budget Manager, Tim Snyder - Mayor's Office, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place in the Aldermen's Chamber and was called to order at 6:15 PM by Vice Chairman Heuston and adjourned at 10:15 PM.

Public Hearing on FY-18 Budget

Two residents spoke about the services provided by the First Source job placement program and urged the committee to provide annual funding for agency.

The Treasurer of Somerville Pop Warner spoke about the cost of using Dilboy Field and requested that the fees be reduced. The assistance provided in the past by the Recreation Department in the form of uniforms and equipment was noted and appreciated by the league.

Judy Jacobs commented that she doesn't think that the city can afford to build a new high school and she said that she is concerned about gentrification, affordable housing and jobs.

The final speaker asked why the mayor appears to automatically increase each budget request 5% over the previous year and commented that he would like to see mayor attend the public hearings on the budgets. He told the members that they have the power to get the information they want and that they should use it.

FY-18 Departmental Budget Review and any and all associated departmental financial matters

The following Aldermen recused themselves from all discussion and/or votes, as noted:

Alderman Sullivan - T&P

Alderman Connolly - HHS (Teen Empowerment)

Alderman Heuston - DPW Administration; MCAB

Alderman Rossetti - MCAB; Communications; 311; TELCO; Planning & Zoning

Alderman McLaughlin - Police (Personnel); HHS - (Teen Empowerment); Grants - (National Grid)

The committee reviewed the proposed budget and discussed the following matters:

OSPCD - Planning

Alderman McLaughlin proposed reducing the salaries of 4 Planning Board members, whose terms have expired to zero. Aldermen Connolly, Sullivan and White spoke against the reduction, while Alderman Niedergang spoke in favor. Mayor Curtatone addressed the committee saying that the Planning Board members have served honorably and boards/commissions should not have the “sword of Damocles” held over their heads, adding that if people aren't paid, how can they be expected to serve. Questions were raised about the ramifications of eliminating the funding for these positions and Solicitor Wright was asked if this would force those 4 individuals to appear before the Committee on Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters. Mr. Wright read a section of an ordinance that said that the BOA shall provide sufficient funds to pay those positions and he also stated that they may remain in the positions until a successor is appointed and confirmed, even after their terms expire. Alderman Davis quoted from the city ordinance and pointed out that mayor shall appoint those positions with the approval of the BOA. Alderman White suggested enacting an ordinance to spell out what happens in the event an appointment is not made after the expiration of a board member's term. Alderman McLaughlin explained that he recommended this cut to force a discussion about confirming appointments.

The motion to cut the salaries of 4 Planning Board members, whose terms have expired to \$0.00, failed on a Roll Call vote of 3 in favor (Aldermen Niedergang, McLaughlin and Davis), 7 against (Aldermen Connolly, Sullivan, McWatters, White, Lafuente, Ballantyne and Heuston) and 1 absent (Alderman Rossetti - recused).

OSPCD

Alderman Ballantyne inquired about funds from OSPCD being used for the School Department and Mayor Curtatone explained that it was a match to funding provided by the School Department. The program will benefit ELL students.

Recreation

Members discussed the possibility of adding a line item to the budget to support youth sports

organizations, e.g., Pop Warner, and funding it through a transfer from the city's general fund. Alderman White referenced M.G.L. c. 44, Sec. 33 which would allow this to happen.

Alderman Ballantyne chaired the portion of the meeting dealing with the DPW.

DPW

Alderman White questioned the Building and Grounds Department's budget for electricity, oil and natural gas and compared the figures from FY-13 forward. Alderman White stated that it appears that the line for electricity (521001) is generating approximately \$250,000 per year in free cash. Alderman Rossetti stated that, according to the information provided to the committee, there was \$1.8 million of unexpended funds remaining in the Building and Grounds Ordinary Maintenance FY-17 budget. Mr. Koty responded by stating that he is unaware of that balance and said that there might be \$40,000 of unexpended funds when the current budget expires on June 30th. Mr. Koty will review the figures tomorrow. Alderman White told Mr. Koty to return before the committee tomorrow with a new figure for the line, or he (Alderman White) would put forth a number to the committee for consideration. Alderman Rossetti said there is approximately a \$3 million available balance in the Ordinary Maintenance accounts across all DPW divisions and she requested that a complete breakdown be provided for each division by tomorrow's Finance Committee meeting. Chairman Ballantyne suggested that Mr. Koty provide the committee with the actual numbers from FY-13 on, to see if there might be a pattern and Alderman White suggested that Mr. Koty review all budget lines and revise them where possible.

Alderman Heuston returned to chair the remainder of the meeting.

Debt Service

Alderman White asked Mr. Bertino to explain why there is a \$750,000 deficit and why was the line item was over spent. Mr. Bertino explained that some of the terms may have been incorrectly stated and said that he can provide a breakdown if requested. \$400,000 will be transferred in and \$300,000 will come from free cash. Alderman White asked for an explanation for the debt service discrepancies and Mr. Bertino said that \$740,000 was paid down and that he would have to research this further. Alderman White provided Mr. Bertino with his notes and asked him to get the answers. Alderman Ballantyne asked that the explanation be provided to the committee by tomorrow's Finance Committee meeting.

General discussion:

Members complained that many documents have not been posted online and that many documents are provided to the committee late, thereby not providing them with enough time to review them.

Proposed Water and Sewer Rate Charges Mr. Snyder referred the committee to the document outlining the proposed rates, which was distributed at the June 15, 2017 meeting of the Finance Committee. Mr. Snyder also read, and the committee approved, the language of the Order approving the FY-18 rate schedule for water and sewer as outlined in the above referenced memo.

Cuts to Departmental Budgets The Personal Services budgets were reduced by a total amount of \$172,482 and Ordinary Maintenance budgets were reduced by a total amount of \$42,500

for a combined reduction of \$214,982. A breakdown of the cuts made is attached to this report.

The committee will continue its review tomorrow evening.

Handouts:

- Comments - L Goldman
- IT Information 6-21-17
- Memo - Economic Development 6-21-17
- DPW Current Balances
- Water and Sewer Rate Language
- FY-18 Budget Cuts thru 6-21-17