



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 12, 2019

REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
William A. White Jr.	Chair	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	Vice Chair	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Absent	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six City Councilor	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Michael Mastrobuoni - SomerStat, Suzanne Rinfrett - Traffic, Chief Charles Breen - SFD, Chief David Fallon - SPD, Candace Cooper - Personnel, Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:10 PM by Chairman White and adjourned at 10:10 PM.

Councilors Ewen-Campen and Clingan were not present for the beginning of the meeting due to their attendance at a neighborhood meeting.

FY-20 Departmental Budget Review and any associated departmental financial matters.

Parking

Ms. Rinfrett explained the reasons for the increase in the department's budget. When asked about the business parking permit program, she stated that it has not been suspended, but it is being monitored closely, adding that there is a wait list for permits in the Union Square area. Councilor Scott asked about deed restricted parking and Ms. Connor informed the committee that the discussions on this topic have been held with the Planning Department, not the Traffic Department. Councilor Niedergang commented that the Council was definitively promised that this would be done as part of the zoning overhaul. Councilor Davis confirmed that OSPCD previously told the Land Use Committee that it could be done and that it has to be done through the Traffic and Parking Department, not the Planning Department. Ms. Rinfrett explained that in order to prevent an address from receiving a permit, the address would have to be removed from the Traffic Department's system, thereby making those addresses ineligible for moving permits,

etc. She assured the committee that a way would be found to implement such a policy. Ms. Rinfrett explained that a request will be presented to the Council in the coming weeks to increase certain parking fines. Councilor Hirsch inquired about possible abatement of fines to low income and elderly residents.

Fire

Councilor Hirsch asked about the department's 5-year plan and Chief Breen explained some possible scenarios for relocating personnel and apparatus. Chief Breen said that Somerville is a densely populated city having many wood frame houses close to one another, making fighting fires more difficult.

Councilor Niedergang requested data for the number of fires during 1988, 1998, 2008, 2018. He also inquired about the possibility of using smaller, more economical apparatus. Chief Breen said that the idea was put forward as part of a recent study and would utilize 2 man squads and that moving in that direction would require negotiating with the union. Councilor Rossetti asked Chief Breen to provide her with the balance in the department's Personal Services accounts, once the current (FY-19) fiscal year ends.

Fire Alarm

Councilor Niedergang pointed out a severe pay differential between Fire Alarm Operators vs. 911 operators, based, he believes, on gender.

Emergency Management

Police

Councilor Niedergang noted that crime is down and asked why personnel levels should be maintained. Chief Fallon explained that policing has evolved into a guardian role, encompassing more than fighting crime.

Councilor Ballantyne requested a written response for the actual number of domestic violence incidents for FY-18 and the projected number for FY-19. She also requested a cost breakdown for the cadet program. Councilor Hirsch asked about traffic enforcement and the ability of detail officers to issue tickets.

Councilor Scott inquired about the difference between overtime and comp time and where it is found in the budget. Chief Fallon said that an audit was done 6 months ago and since that time, comp time has nearly been eliminated by limiting accrual to no more than 40 hours.

Councilor Scott questioned the chief on the length of time it's taking to fill two vacant captain positions, saying that it has a cascading effect. Councilor Niedergang asked for information on how long the 6 patrolman positions have been vacant, suggesting that perhaps some positions aren't needed, since the department ran effectively with them.

Councilor Rossetti asked Chief Fallon to review the department's grant funding with the thought of possibly applying some funds to lower the department's budget request.

Animal Control

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about the Animal Control Officer position whose request for confirmation was recently withdrawn by the Administration. Ms. Cooper stated that she could not discuss specifics of this matter in this meeting's forum. She also said that the position does

require confirmation by the Council, but the Administration is not at the point where it's ready to put forth a request for confirmation. At the present time, there are no vacancies in the department.

E-911

206099: City Solicitor submitting an Ordinance to replace Ordinance 5-32 regarding Fire Department salaries.

Ms. Cooper addressed this matter and gave some history for this non-union position, explaining why there has not been much incentive for taking the position. At the present time, Civil Service's Human Resources Division is not offering exams for the position of Chief Engineer. Exams conducted by an assessment center do not change the scope of the exams, can be offered to statewide candidates and allow municipalities to maintain local preference. Councilors Rossetti and McLaughlin asked if this would take the position out of Civil Service, based on how the ordinance change is worded. Ms. Cooper replied that the change is to allow the city to negotiate the salary directly with the Chief Engineer. Ms. Cooper explained that assessment centers are under contract with Civil Service and that the proposed changes to the ordinance would apply to salary, vacation, etc., but the position would still have the full protection of Civil Service. Councilor McLaughlin would like to know if any other municipalities have gone this route and Chairman White asked Ms. Cooper to look into it and report back to the committee. Councilor Scott would like an explanation of why the Chief Engineer's salary couldn't be tied to another factor of a private's salary to raise it to a higher rate.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Handout:

- Personnel Response (with 206099)