



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 9, 2023

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:00 p.m. and adjourned at 7:04 p.m. on a Roll Call Vote: 5 in favor (Councilors Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Kelly, Scott, Wilson), 0 opposed, 1 absent (Councilor Pineda Neufeld).

City Council President Ewen-Campen was appointed to replace Councilor Pineda Neufeld on the Finance Committee until further notice.

Others present:

Michael Potere – Assistant Clerk of Committees; Karin Carroll – Director of Health & Human Services; Christopher Major – Assistant Chief Engineer, Fire Department; Neha Singh – Legislative Liaison; Alan Inacio – Director of Finance & Community Development; Christopher Ward – Deputy Chief, Police Department; Edward Bean – Finance Director; Richard Raiche – Director of IAM.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Jake Wilson, Vice Chair Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Charlotte Kelly, Jesse Clingan and Ben Ewen-Campen

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-0663](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of April 25, 2023.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ewen-Campen

ABSENT: Pineda Neufeld

Appropriations

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0673](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$26,279.51 from the Medical Marijuana Stabilization Fund for the Supervised Consumption Plan.

Director Carroll stated that this item reflects an expense that was previously approved but for which the invoice was only recently received due to an administrative error. Chair Wilson asked about the balance of the Medical Marijuana Stabilization Fund, and Director Bean stated that it is \$3,188,221.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ewen-Campen

ABSENT: Pineda Neufeld

Grant Acceptances

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0661](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$17,950 grant with no new match required, from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources to the Health and Human Services Department for produce for the Mobile Market.

Director Carroll stated that this item was being withdrawn because it inaccurately states the purpose of the request as for “produce,” when the request is actually for restructuring and capacity building, and that the item would be resubmitted with an accurate description for the next Finance Committee meeting.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE WITHDRAWN**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ewen-Campen

ABSENT: Pineda Neufeld

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0668](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$65,040 grant with no new match required, from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to the Police Department for the traffic safety program.

Deputy Chief Ward stated that, in response to feedback from the Finance Committee in 2022, the grant no longer includes a minimum stop quota of three motor vehicles per hour, adding that Somerville’s response resulted in that quota being removed statewide. Chair Wilson, Councilor Kelly, and Councilor Scott expressed strong support for this change.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked if stops had already been selected for the speed signs, and Deputy Chief Ward responded that they were, and included College Avenue and Washington Street, and other locations where there has been an increase in speeding citations and/or pedestrian-involved motor vehicle citations.

Councilor Kelly asked if the radar devices being purchased with the grant would be kept in use by the city, and Deputy Chief Ward replied that they would be property of the city and stored and recharged in the garage under the police station.

Councilor Kelly asked how the 2,500 pieces of educational material would be distributed, and Deputy Chief Ward replied that they would be printed in English and Spanish and handed out at community events, as well as to motorists during motor vehicle stops. Councilor Kelly asked about the differences between overtime in the grant for pedestrian and bike enforcement compared to traffic enforcement, and Deputy Chief Ward replied that the former would be uniformed officers on foot handing out educational materials for infractions by bicyclists and pedestrians, and the

latter would be to hand out the materials to motorists who have been stopped by police. Councilor Kelly stated that a better way to improve safety for pedestrians and bikers would be to change the physical roads, as opposed to increased policing.

Councilor Scott asked how many hours the \$8,500 in overtime provided in the grant would cover, and Deputy Chief Ward replied that it would cover two officers at eight city events for eight hours at a time.

Chair Wilson asked if the focus of the grant had shifted to bike and pedestrian enforcement in light of the change that removed jaywalking as an offense in the city, and Deputy Chief Ward confirmed that was correct.

Chair Wilson asked for clarification regarding the number of fatal crashes in the city during 2021, where the grant lists zero but the state database lists two. Deputy Chief Ward replied that the state was responsible for that number and it was unclear where the discrepancy originated.

Chair Wilson called for a roll call vote on this item: 5 in favor (Councilors Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Kelly, Scott, Wilson), 0 opposed, 1 absent (Councilor Pineda Neufeld).

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ewen-Campen

ABSENT: Pineda Neufeld

Transfers

5. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-0549](#))

Requesting approval of a transfer of \$60,000 from the Fire Department Salaries Account to the Fire Alarm Overtime Account to cover a deficit in the Fire Alarm Overtime account.

Deputy Chief Major stated this item reflects two open positions in fire alarm that have been open since January, and it had been anticipated that they would be filled by now but the department has not been able to do so, and these funds would cover the additional overtime required to cover those positions.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ewen-Campen

ABSENT: Pineda Neufeld

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6. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0655](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$17,590.52 from the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) Economic Development Division Personal Services Account to the OSPCD Administration Personal Services Account to fund a grants and procurement analyst position.
- Director Inacio stated the purpose of creating this position is to cover an FMLA staff absence in the department, and that the absence is for a critical member of the OSPCD team at an important time of year given that a substantial portion of the nonprofit agency contracts and grants agreements would be processed during this time. Director Inacio added that this staffing shortage and the immediate need for additional assistance at this time of year is why this request precedes the upcoming budget process.
- Councilor Ewen-Campen expressed support for this item, despite its timing in relation to the budget.
- Councilor Kelly expressed concern for the timing of the request being 16 days before the Fiscal Year 2024 budget would be reviewed. Councilor Kelly asked if the HHS position that was approved two weeks ago had been filled, and Legislative Liaison Singh indicated that they did not know the status of that position.
- Councilor Scott asked why a staff absence due to FMLA leave required the creation of a new position, and Director Inacio replied that the original intent was to create the position as part of the department's budget proposal, but that the staff member taking FMLA created some urgency in the hiring process, and that even a few weeks of additional time to hire and bring aboard another staff member to help with grants and procurements would help the department execute its goals in those areas. Councilor Scott expressed support for adding staff to work on grants, but stated they will not support this item due to the close proximity to FY 2024 budget consideration.
- Chair Wilson asked how long it would take to fill the position, and Director Inacio stated approximately 4-8 weeks, and reiterated that this time of year is particularly important for the department because it begins the contracting process for a lot of the city's nonprofit partners. Chair Wilson asked what impact not having this position filled would have on the community's nonprofit partners, and Director Inacio replied that grants for the Community Development Block, Housing and Urban Development, Community Preservation Act, Affordable Housing Trust all have requests for proposals that come up at this time of year, and that the person hired in this role would work on them.
- Councilor Clingan expressed support for the item and noted how difficult it can be to hire in the current market. Councilor Clingan asked about the need for the new position more generally, and Director Inacio replied that the breadth and depth of programs run through the department has grown
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throughout the years, particularly related to increases in funds from the COVID era, and that the new role would handle that additional volume. Director Inacio added that burnout and turnover can also impact staffing, and that the additional role would reduce the workload for the rest of the department's staff.

Councilor Scott asked what the department would have done if this staffing need occurred in August, and Director Inacio replied that this was intended to be a budget request, but that the need was acute and required being moved ahead because it is a role that cannot be easily filled by a temp, for example, due to its specialized nature.

Chair Wilson expressed support for the item.

Chair Wilson called for a roll call vote on this item: 3 in favor (Councilors Ewen-Campen, Clingan, Wilson), 2 opposed (Councilors Kelly, Scott), 1 absent (Councilor Pineda Neufeld).

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ewen-Campen

NAY: Vice Chair Scott and City Councilor At Large Kelly

ABSENT: Pineda Neufeld

7. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-0656](#))

Requesting approval of a transfer of \$27,200 from the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) Housing Division Personal Services Account to the OSPCD Administration Division Personal Services Account to fund temporary salaries to cover the OSPCD special counsel vacancy.

Director Inacio stated this item is intended to continue to fund the salary for the department's special counsel, who is serving as a retired public employee that is limited to six hours per week, and the funding discrepancy arose because the full-time position, which is currently vacant, has a lower salary level.

Councilor Kelly asked if this role was being filled by a retired public employee until a full-time could be hired during the next fiscal year, and Director Inacio confirmed this is accurate.

Chair Wilson asked about the sources of funding for the position, and Director Inacio stated that the role is funded through OSPCD and the law department due to the specific nature of the work involved in the position.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ewen-Campen

ABSENT: Pineda Neufeld

Contracts and Easements

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0643](#)) Requesting approval of a time-only contract extension for PMA Consultants LLC, for owner's project manager (OPM) services for the Building Master Plan project.

Director Raiche stated this was to keep the relationship with the contractor going, with the hope they will also be the OPM for the design and construction phase for the 1895 project.

Chair Wilson expressed support for this item.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ewen-Campen

ABSENT: Pineda Neufeld

Orders

9. Order (ID # [23-0359](#)) By Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Kelly That the City Solicitor advise this Council regarding the city's ability to use General Funds for a mass medical debt relief program.

Chair Wilson stated that Councilor Burnley spoke with the City Solicitor regarding this item and asked that it be marked work completed.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2023-05-09 OSPCD Funds Under Mgmt (with 23-0655)