



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Finance Committee

### Meeting Minutes

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**Tuesday, June 20, 2023**

**6:00 PM**

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This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:04 pm and adjourned at 8:11 pm with a roll call vote of all in favor (Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Kelly, Councilor Scott, and Chair Wilson), none opposed, and none absent.

Others present: Michael Mastrobuoni – Auditing, Nicholas Antanavica – ISD, Jill Lathan – DPW, Julie Spurr-Knight – DPW, Ben Waldrip – DPW, Michael Bowler – DPW, Jeffrey Barbieri – DPW, Lorraine Moorehouse – DPW, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

#### **Roll Call**

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

#### **1. Review of the FY 2024 Budget**

- **DPW Administration**
- **Buildings**
- **Grounds**
- **Field Maintenance**
- **School Custodians**
- **Solid Waste**
- **Lights & Lines / Electrical**
- **Highway**
- **Fleet Management**
- **Snow Removal**
- **Inspectional Services**

#### ISD

Dir. Antanavica covered FY24 budget requests for additional rodent control, an environmental health manager position and an additional plumbing inspector position, and increased training for department staff. Councilor Scott asked why the salary line was unchanged from FY23 with the addition of two new positions. Dir. Antanavica said that they are transferring some of the Ordinary Maintenance line to fund the new positions. There was discussion on factors such as staffing that would affect the amounts in the salary line. A discrepancy was found between the number of positions listed on councilors' reference documents (37) and on the Director's organization chart (40).

Councilor Kelly requested a copy of the current rodent control contract set to expire this year. She had questions on whether ISD planned to return for a mid-year appropriation for extermination and what partial funding of carbon monoxide pumps through DPW would look like. Dir. Antanavica detailed

the contracts for which they intend to request appropriations, which include the SMART boxes. Dir. Antanavica described coordination efforts with DPW and noted that they want to show a targeted approach with their methods. Councilor Scott asked if there have been any program improvement requests to increase staffing, to which Dir. Antanavica said no, but there is a need for training.

#### DPW Administration

Commissioner Lathan listed DPW's efforts and accomplishments from FY23, including improving payment and communications with vendors, installing community path lighting, establishing protocols to safeguard vulnerable road users, planting native species, and replacing outdated HVAC systems. She described four new personnel positions being requested for FY24, including an in-house procurement analyst and a Deputy Director of Finance and Administration. Dir. Spurr-Knight described the need for a deputy director and noted an increased line for fuel purchasing.

#### Buildings

Dir. Spurr-Knight gave project highlights from FY23, including HVAC replacement and maintenance work in schools. She said that the largest drivers for the Buildings budget are electric, natural gas, and HVAC maintenance and repairs. Chair Wilson asked if the Healey School's HVAC was replaced in FY23 and for elaboration on the "split" project. Dir. Spurr-Knight said that there was one replacement in the IT room and a second one is scheduled.

Councilor Kelly asked about outdoor bathroom maintenance. Dir. Spurr-Knight said that DPW will be procuring outdoor cleaning for now due to the resources required, such as for sharps removal. Councilor Kelly requested a breakdown of the environmental services line. She also asked about the increased funds for janitorial services despite no new custodian positions this year, whether DPW had considered hiring more custodians, and why floor surface replacement costs had increased. Mr. Bowler said the funds are important because they will not know what is under the old floors until they are tested.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked what DPW is doing to make sure Winter Hill is ready for the first day of school in the fall. Dir. Lathan said that the department is fully committed to respond and that there is no concern about financial barriers for the repairs.

Councilor Scott noted a discrepancy on the number of vacancies and asked for the timing of recent vacancies. She also said that what was listed for FY22 was not the actual budgeted amount, and that the actual budget for Personal Services seems to be going down. Dir. Weisman said that the

System Buildings Manager position was accidentally allocated into the DPW Administration budget and that will be fixed in the final appropriation. He also said that the overtime budget for Grounds was originally in Buildings, but it was split off.

#### Grounds and Field Maintenance

Superintendent Waldrip described major projects in FY23, including transitioning from traditional trash cans to Big Belly style bins. Chair Wilson asked about the status of work done at Lincoln Park in the last year. Supt. Waldrip gave updates on irrigation, aeration and top dressing work at the park and noted that soil composition was found to be sandier than expected. He said DPW is planning for a late fall growing period. Chair Wilson said he would like to see more infill for the synthetic fields.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked for the status of Big Belly orders for Ward Three. Supt. Waldrip said that there had been supply chain issues, but DPW received a large order in the last few weeks and are distributing those. Councilor Scott asked where to find the large invoices for outside contracts for Lincoln Park, which are in the R&M Parks and Recreation Facilities line. Supt. Waldrip said there have been early discussions of hiring specialized workers at Lincoln Park. Councilor Scott asked why the tree crew is vacant. Dir. Weisman said that they were in negotiations with SMEA about the tree crew positions, but they reached an agreement to raise the salaries of those positions. The positions were posted internally at first, but with no internal applicants, they were publicized.

#### School Custodians

Councilor Scott asked to confirm that there are five vacancies in the School Custodians division. Dir. Weisman said that there are only two vacancies.

#### Solid Waste

Dir. Weisman reviewed line increases for Solid Waste. Councilor Kelly asked how rates are changing with the city's hauling contract with Boston Carting. Dir. Weisman said that rates are more expensive, with higher prices for diesel and fuel. He also said the division wants to combine tipping and hauling in one contract to put them out to bid together.

#### Lights & Lines / Electrical

#### Highway

Superintendent Barbieri spoke to the division's initiatives and volume of 311 calls addressed. He said DPW purchased equipment for Mobility to maintain bike lanes and established a snow removal program for the bike

path.

Councilor Scott commented on reports of sidewalk repairs done with asphalt, to which Supt. Barbieri replied that those were temporary fixes in winter when concrete was unavailable. He said that highway staff will do repairs on those sidewalks this summer. Councilor Scott also asked about vacancies in Highways - of which there are ten - and whether curb cuts have reached ADA compliance yet. Dir. Weisman said curb cut crews are fully staffed and are receiving training on ADA compliance.

#### Fleet Management

Fleet Manager Moorehouse said that DPW completed 200 repairs on the fleet in FY23, but many of those were due to a rapidly deteriorating fleet. In response, Ms. Moorehouse said she created a fleet optimization plan to deploy more efficient vehicles and replace 24 vehicles through bond funding.

Councilor Scott asked about employees listed in the directory that they have not seen in years. Dir. Lathan said that this needs to be addressed with Human Resources, and that DPW can coordinate to have a response sent from HR, but they are not at liberty to discuss the issue. Councilor Scott asked if there is a new animal control van, when the sweeper currently under repair was last returned to service, and whether there is an asset management system in place. For the latter, Dir. Weisman said that a contractor set up an inventory database in FY23, and DPW will update that going forward.

#### Snow Removal

Councilor Scott said that DPW received a supplemental appropriation for snow removal in FY23, a year without much snow, and asked where those funds went. Dir. Weisman said that despite low snowfall, there were 21 winter weather events in 2023, and DPW needs to be prepared to act regardless. He also said that because snowfall is unpredictable, DPW does not overbudget for snow removal, instead supplementing with Free Cash if needed.

Note: Written comment may also be emailed to [cityclerk@somervillema.gov](mailto:cityclerk@somervillema.gov) and will be accepted until noon on Wednesday, June 21, 2023.

#### Non-Budgetary Items

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0845](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$50,000 from the Department of Public Works (DPW) Admin Salaries Account to the DPW Snow Removal Account to cover a deficit.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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3. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0870](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$150,000 from the Department of Public Works (DPW) Grounds Wages Account to the DPW Admin Motor Gas and Oil Account to fund invoices on hand and May & June expense.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
4. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0872](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$35,000 from the Department of Public Works (DPW) Highway Salary Account to the DPW Admin Professional & Technical Account to cover May & June expenses.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
5. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0873](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$211,370.90 from the Department of Public Works (DPW) Highway Wages Account to the DPW Buildings Electricity Account for May & June expenses.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
6. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0875](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$45,000 from the Department of Public Works (DPW) Highway Wages Account to the DPW Snow Removal Account to cover a deficit.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
7. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0964](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$11,000 from the Department of Public Works (DPW) Highway Fence Installation Account to the DPW Buildings Moving Services Account for school related moving services.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
8. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1039](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$188,629.10 from the Department of Public Works (DPW) Custodial Salaries Account to the DPW Snow Removal Account to cover a deficit.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

## Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2023-06-20 DPW Questions FY24
- Finance - 2023-06-20 ISD Response 6-16-23
- Finance - 2023-06-020 Buildings Questions FY24 DPW