



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Finance Committee

### Meeting Minutes

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**Tuesday, May 7, 2024**

**6:00 PM**

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This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:03pm and adjourned at 7:21 pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilor Clingan, Councilor Burnley, Councilor Sait, Chair Wilson), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Scott).

Others present: Hannah Carrillo - Mayor's Office, Karin Carroll - HHS, Jeffrey Digregorio - SPD, Julie Spurr-Knight - DPW, Jill Lathan - DPW, Richard Raiche - IAM, Catherine Lester Salchert - OSPCD, Demetrios Vidalis - Water and Sewer, Natasha Frazier - Assistant Clerk of Committees.

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Others present: Hannah Carrillo - Mayor's Office, Karin Carroll - HHS, Jeffrey Digregorio - SPD, Julie Spurr-Knight - DPW, Jill Lathan - DPW, Richard Raiche - IAM, Catherine Lester Salchert - OSPCD, Demetrios Vidalis - Water and Sewer, Natasha Frazier - Assistant Clerk of Committees.

#### Roll Call

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

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| 1. | Committee Minutes<br>(ID # <a href="#">24-0571</a> ) | Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of April 23, 2024. |
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<b>RESULT:</b>	<b><u>ACCEPTED</u></b>
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#### Grant and Gift Acceptances

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| 2. | Mayor's Request<br>(ID # <a href="#">24-0575</a> ) | Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$243,094 grant with no new match required, from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center to the Office of Sustainability and Environment, for a residential decarbonization outreach campaign and two-year Energy Advisor position. |
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Chair Wilson stated there is a memo attached to this item submitted by Garrett Anderson of OSE and available to this public as an attachment. Councilor Burnley asked if someone from the Administration could speak to the scale of decarbonization and retrofitting, and the costs associated with
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both. He asked how much money is necessary to decarbonize the actual building in Somerville that this position will be working to accomplish, rather than the cost of the position itself. Ms. Carrillo will follow up with OSE staff to answer this question. Councilor Sait asked if there is outreach being done and if a candidate is not found for this position, where these funds will be allocated. Councilor Sait asked what portion of the funds are going towards funding the position versus campaign outreach. Ms. Carrillo will follow up with OSE on this question as well.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

### Contracts and Easements

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0565](#)) Requesting approval of a Pedestrian Access Sidewalk Easement and Maintenance License at 599 Somerville Avenue.

Ms. Salchert stated that this is a basic sidewalk easement and maintenance agreement. She stated that most of the sidewalk is on private property than public property, and that the property owners are required to maintain it and provide public access 24/7. Chair Wilson spoke up to ensure no trees will be removed from this location in the process given the prior history with this issue.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

### Appropriations

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0579](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$400,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Emergency Response Stabilization Fund to provide temporary shelter, food, and other common necessities of life to displaced individuals and families.

Director Carroll stated that this is a direct response to City staff identifying a chronic emergency housing need in the community. This would increase the number of beds available for unhoused community members. More specifically, this appropriation would fund a contract with the Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC) for the expansion of ten additional ADA compliant beds. The cost is \$109.59 per client per night for each of the 10 beds. This cost would allow SHC to provide the following: accessible shelter, beds, access to shower and laundry, a full time case manager to assist with matters such their housing searches, mental health, SNAP benefits. There will be direct care, two meals with a kitchen and a cook, and professional laundering service for bedding. Director Carroll noted that more of these beds will be designated for adult men than for women, since there is another women's shelter in town.

Chair Wilson expressed support for addressing this community need. After confirming SHC will carry out this work, he expressed his gratitude for SHC being an excellent community partner. Councilor Burnley asked where the shelter is located and Director Carroll stated it is currently located in Davis Square, but SHC is exploring options for expansion. Councilor Sait asked

how long the expansion will exist for. Director Carroll stated that this contract aims to meet an immediate need using available funds right now and will need to reevaluate needs next year.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

5. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [24-0580](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$400,000 from the Emergency Stabilization Fund to support critical emergency shelter services.

This item was taken up with Agenda Item 4, ID #24-0579. See minutes for that item.

**RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

6. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [24-0577](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$2,041,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Facility Renovation and Reconstruction Stabilization Fund for continued renovations to the Edgerly School to accommodate Pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms for the Winter Hill Community Innovation School students.

Director Raiche stated that the intent is to bring Pre-K and two kindergarten classes under one roof at Bonair Street, so that all of Winter Hill is reunited under one roof. He said they are downsizing some spaces to accommodate room for these additions. They will also be installing bathrooms appropriate for children. Additionally, the City is upgrading some of the electrical equipment in the building, which will enable them to provide air conditioning in the gym and the cafeteria. He anticipates this will be done by Spring 2025 and Summer 2025 and available for the remainder of the duration at this location.

Chair Wilson stated that his understanding based on conversations with Director Raiche's staff is that a lot of this work is specific to early childhood education, and that the work will need to be redone in some fashion when the Winter Hill Wildcats are in their new home, and the Edgerly will return to being an administrative building for the District and possibly City department building. Director Raiche stated that is correct, and that the electrical updates will benefit the building as a whole. Director Raiche stated that as the Brown building is continuing to get older, and by the time the new Winter Hill is constructed, the West and the Healey will start being old, so having this space for little kids could be helpful to have in the portfolio. Chair Wilson stated that \$2 million is just the latest considerable price we are paying for not tackling our two crumbling school buildings sooner.

Councilor Sait asked if this appropriation would go towards soundproofing as well. Director Raiche said that it will. Councilor Burnley asked what "playwork services" means. Director Raiche stated that Winter Hill families have asked for additional play structures, and that they cannot be installed at the Edgerly, so the City will be contracting with a service provider that engages younger students in active play. The "playwork services" concept

was found by the school principal and industry reviews are positive. Councilor Burnley expressed support for workarounds and asked how long this program will be funded. Director Raiche stated the playwork services will initially be funded for one year and if program is successful it may be funded in future years. They will re-evaluate in one year.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

7. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [24-0578](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$2,041,000 from the Facility Renovation and Reconstruction Stabilization Fund for continued renovations to the Edgerly School to accommodate Pre-K and Kindergarten classrooms for the Winter Hill Community Innovation School students.

This item was taken up with agenda item 6, ID #24-0577. See minutes for that item.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

8. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [24-0572](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$237,468 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Department of Public Works Buildings Interior Building Maintenance Account for repairs to the Dilboy Pool.

Commissioner Lathan stated that this appropriation is for repairs to the Dilboy Pool due to winter water damage, and DPW's priority is to ensure the pool opens for the summer season. DPW put the bid out and received contract awards for plumbing and electrical work. This work was previously overseen by Parks and Recreation, and DPW stepped in for facilities management to help ensure protection of assets, and because DPW has the infrastructure and capacity. DPW is coordinating with DCR. DPW has an agreement to oversee the complex that includes the pool and DPW is responsible for maintenance issues that occur.

Chair Wilson emphasized the importance of Dilboy pool to the City, stating that it is a resource for community members to cool down, especially those without air conditioning. He asked what the timeline is for this work and if the pool will open according to schedule. Commissioner Lathan stated that DPW has awarded the contract and everything is ready to go pending appropriations. She stated that this is a priority and they are committed to pool opening on time. They are not anticipating a delay at this juncture. She stated that DPW did research to ensure the scope of work is correct, but is an old building, and they plan to do electrical and plumbing renovations. She stated they will work around the clock if needed to meet the summertime goal. She stated that this pool is the Cape Cod of many community members.

Chair Wilson emphasized the importance of communication strategies with the community if an unexpected delay arises. He inquired about preventing this issue from recurring in future. Director Lathan confirmed there are plans in place to prevent it from recurring. Councilor Sait asked about the scope of

work that will be completed by DPW versus the contractors. Commissioner Lathan stated all of the work will be completed by contractors and that DPW will do a deep clean once projects are complete, before the pool opens. Commissioner Lathan stated that all of the requested funding will go towards the contractors who won the bids to complete this work.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

9. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [24-0576](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$150,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Facility Renovation and Reconstruction Stabilization Fund for building improvements at 77 Broadway for the East Somerville Police sub-station.

Captain Digregorio described the sub-station as a safe interview space for survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. SPD worked with Melissa Woods to secure an architect to do the drawings for this space, and they realized they needed an ADA compliant bathroom for the public meetings that will also occur at this location. He stated that Capital Projects has money for the design but not the construction, and Director Bean would like this money appropriated for the bathroom. Chair Wilson asked how members of the public will gain access to the substation. Captain Digregorio said the sub-station is not staffed 24/7 and when it is staffed, it will be staffed by one civilian employee. He said that unlike 220 Washington St., which is an open facility, he does not envision that for this space because there are no police staff, just one civilian employee, but that there will be public events there.

Chair Wilson asked if the policy will be that if someone buzzes up wanting to use the bathroom, if the answer will be no. Captain Digregorio stated he prefers not to speak on the official policy as he is unsure what that policy will be, but he can follow up. Chair Wilson stated that Councilor McLaughlin views the sub-station as potential solution to a major issue in the neighborhood in which people eliminate in public spaces due to the lack of public restrooms. Chair Wilson encouraged SPD to bring Councilor McLaughlin into this matter, as he will likely have a lot of questions about public access to the restroom at the upcoming City Council meeting. Councilor Burnley asked if all of the appropriations for this item are going towards the building improvements, or if there is other work it is going towards. Ms. Carrillo stated that she discussed this item with Director Woods and that this estimate is for the buildout only.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

Transfers

10. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [24-0564](#))

Requesting approval of a transfer of \$13,800 from the Police Salaries Account to the Police Special Items Rental Buildings Account to pay the remaining East Substation lease payments for FY 2024.

This item was taken up with Agenda Item 9, ID #24-0576. See minutes for

that item.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

11. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0573](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$1,095,000 from various Department of Public Works personal services accounts to the Department of Public Works Buildings Electricity Account to cover a deficit.

Director Spurr-Knight stated that this particular line has been underfunded since 2020. She stated there has been a 46% increase in rates from 2020 to present, and spending in this line is over \$2.7 million. Her goal is to bring this in line for the next budget season. They plan to fund this line through personnel budgets. Chair Wilson asked if prices are increasing. Director Spurr-Knight stated that the biggest increase was in 2021, when inflation spiked. She stated that they plan to do an energy analysis, an audit on all accounts, and explore solar credits in an effort to gain control over the increases on this line. Councilor Burnley asked if personnel lines raise any concerns of going over budget. Director Spurr-Knight explained how the details of her analysis indicated they would not go over budget. Chair Wilson stated he thought the City was switching from a tonnage system to a flat rate system for recycling. Director Spurr-Knight stated that she would need to look into this and will follow-up.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

12. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0574](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$248,111 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Department of Public Works Buildings Natural Gas Account for the remediation of an expected year end deficit.

Director Spurr-Knight stated that this is natural gas line, for which DPW previously budgeted \$800,000 the past two years, but the actual cost the past 2 years was \$820,000 and \$830,000. She stated that rates have increased and she expects to be in a deficit because \$108,000 was just approved a year prior. There was no further discussion beyond this initial statement by Director Spurr-Knight.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

### Orders

13. Order (ID # [24-0337](#)) By Councilor Wilson and Councilor Scott  
That the Director of Water and Sewer and the Director of Procurement and Contracting Services update this Council on the bidding process for IFB 24-39 (Repairs to Water Main Gate Valves and Appurtenance) and IFB 24-29 (Water Distribution System Maintenance & Repairs) and ensure documentation is updated on the city's website for these bids and the previous versions of these bids (IFB 21-51 and IFB 21-52) when they were previously awarded in 2021.

Chair Wilson stated that the intent of this item is to understand why the previous contractor did not bid on this work and why there is a significant

increase in cost for the contracted work. Director Vidalis stated that he does not know why the previous contractor did not submit for this round of bidding. He stated that the increase in cost of the work is due to inflation, and that it was budgeted for accordingly. Chair Wilson stated that the new contract represents over a 50% increase in cost, underscoring the need for an in-house position at the Water and Sewer Department rather than contracting out the work. Chair Wilson asked what the implications are for the 3-year contract if the Water and Sewer Department becomes fully staffed during that time. Director Vidalis described how the contract stipulates that emergency response services are rendered on as-needed basis; if the Department becomes fully staffed in the meantime, work will default to the Department. Councilor Clingan asked how many bidders there were for this contract. Director Vidalis stated there was one bidder for the Water Distribution System Maintenance & Repairs contract, and two bidders for the Repairs to Water Main Gate Valves and Appurtenance contract. Councilor Clingan asked how bids are evaluated when there is only one bidder and where the awarded contractors are located. Director Vidalis stated that when there is one bidder, the Department evaluates the bid according to what they expected to pay for the work, and determines whether the bidder is responsible. He stated that the headquarters of each business are in Salem and Stoneham, but they might have yards closer to Somerville.

Councilor Clingan stated that he hopes the City can utilize contractors much less or not at all in future. He also stated that he was unsure why an established local contractor who previously did this work did not submit a bid. He asked if there is anything different in this contract than the previous one. Director Vidalis stated there is nothing substantially different in the contract regarding the scope of the work. Councilor Clingan expressed general concerns with the cost of this work going up and fewer people bidding to do the work. He stated that this presents a concern to taxpayers of costs going down the drain. Previously, they had a contractor who knew the inner workings of the City underground, and now there is a drastic increase in cost. Chair Wilson asked if the selected contractors plan to establish a presence in Somerville, which would be helpful during emergency repairs for proximity's case. Director Vidalis stated that the contractors accepted this work knowing there is no staging area provided and that they must respond to all emergencies within the previously agreed upon timeframe. There was additional discussion regarding the terms of the contracts, and Chair Wilson concluded by reiterating a desire to fill the in-house positions at the Water and Sewer Department.

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

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2024-05-07 Committee Memo (with 24-0575)