



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

6:00 PM

The meeting took place virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 8:32 PM on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Clingan, Burnley, Scott and Wilson), none against and 1 absent (Councilor Sait).

Others present:

Brian Postlewaite – Director of Engineering, Kate Hartke – Director of Grants Development, Erica Satin-Hernandez – Director - ARPA, Alan Inacio - Director of Finance and Community Development, Tom Galligani - Executive Director of OSPCD, Anthony Delmonaco - Director of Finance and Administration, Mohammed Uddin – Finance Analyst, Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan

Absent: Ward Two City Councilor Naima Sait

Old Business

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0373](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of March 12, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

2. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0404](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of March 19, 2024.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

3. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0405](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 19, 2024.
- RESULT:** ACCEPTED
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
- ABSENT:** Ward Two City Councilor Sait
4. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0410](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee of the Whole Meeting of March 26, 2024.
- RESULT:** ACCEPTED
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
- ABSENT:** Ward Two City Councilor Sait
5. Communication (ID # [24-0202](#)) By Councilor Mbah
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2025.
- This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting an inadvertently 'kept in committee' instead of being 'placed on file'.
- RESULT:** RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED
6. Resolution (ID # [24-0204](#)) By Councilor Clingan
That the Administration fund the creation of an entire unit within the Department of Public Works tasked with battling the city's growing rodent infestation.
- This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting an inadvertently 'kept in committee' instead of being 'placed on file'.
- RESULT:** RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE
7. Resolution (ID # [24-0211](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Administration include in the FY 2025 budget, additional funding for rodent mitigation efforts, including an Office of Rodent Prevention similar to the one proposed in Boston, with appropriate staffing.
- This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting an inadvertently 'kept in committee' instead of being 'placed on file'.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE

8. Resolution
(ID # [24-0212](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Administration include in the FY 2025 budget, funding for a home air filtration pilot program to address air pollution along Interstate 93.

This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting an inadvertently 'kept in committee' instead of being 'placed on file'.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE

9. Communication
(ID # [24-0214](#))

By Councilor Wilson

Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2025.

This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting an inadvertently 'kept in committee' instead of being 'placed on file'.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

10. Communication
(ID # [24-0327](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen

Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2025.

This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting an inadvertently 'kept in committee' instead of being 'placed on file'.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

11. Communication
(ID # [24-0340](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2025.

This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting an inadvertently 'kept in committee' instead of being 'placed on file'.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

12. Communication
(ID # [24-0342](#))

By Councilor Strezo

Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2025.

This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting an inadvertently 'kept in committee' instead of being 'placed on file'.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

13. Communication
(ID # [24-0377](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr.
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2025.

This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting and inadvertently ‘kept in committee’ instead of being ‘placed on file’.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

14. Communication
(ID # [24-0378](#))

By Councilor Davis
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2025.

This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting and inadvertently ‘kept in committee’ instead of being ‘placed on file’.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

15. Communication
(ID # [24-0390](#))

By Councilor Sait
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2025.

This item was discussed at a prior Finance Committee meeting and inadvertently ‘kept in committee’ instead of being ‘placed on file’.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Property/Land Transactions

16. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-0081](#))

Requesting approval of the discontinuance of Palmer Avenue.

Director Inacio informed the committee that this site will be converted to open space.
Chair Wilson opened the Public Hearing to hear from any interested parties. There being no speakers, either in favor or in opposition to the item, the Public Hearing was closed.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

Contracts

- 17. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0280](#)) Requesting approval of a time-only extension to 6/30/2025 for the contract with Classic Site Solutions, to complete approved additional design services for the Healey schoolyard, soccer field and path.

Director Inacio explained that this extension will provide time to finish work on new plant rails, installing grass, raising the height of fencing, and correcting some measurement lines on the soccer field. It's expected that the work will be substantially finished by June 15th with final completion by June 24th.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait
- 18. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0193](#)) Requesting approval of a time-only extension to 4/30/2025 for the contract with ADS LLC for flow metering services.

The administration has submitted a memo explaining this item. Chair Wilson stressed that this item is about sewer flow metering, not the recent water/sewer bills that were sent out. Councilor Scott noted that the sewer outflow monitoring is required by the DEP.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait
- 19. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0323](#)) Requesting approval to enter into a contract with outside legal counsel for the appeal of the Superior Court judgment against the Somerville Redevelopment Authority in the matter of the 90 Washington Street property at Cobble Hill.

Counsel Salchert reported that the city secured an opinion from outside legal counsel that indicated that the city has a viable case to appeal. Due to the engagement deadlines, outside counsel has already done a good amount of work on the city's behalf without being paid for such work. At the present time, the parties are waiting for a hearing date. All of the pleadings filed so far are public. Counsel Salchert noted that the specifics of this matter may be discussed in Executive Session at the April 11th City Council meeting.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**

Appropriations

20. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0245](#)) Requesting approval to appropriate \$450,000 from the Traffic Safety Stabilization fund for engineering and streetscape reconstruction work in the Western Washington Street area.

Director Postlewaite explained that during the fall of 2022, the community requested the addition of two items that would have impacted the budget of the project (that had already been approved and could not be revised). Since that time, alternate funding mechanisms were found to bridge the funding gap to provide these safety items. Work on the drainage improvements began last fall and have work on sidewalk demolition and replacement has commenced.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

21. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0336](#)) Requesting approval to appropriate \$2,300,000 from the Parks Stabilization Fund to purchase the parcel located at 508-512 Columbia Street.

Discussed with item# 24-0335.
 Director Galligani explained that this is a friendly taking of 2 parcels to be used as a park. The Property was put up for sale and the owner and the city signed a Purchase and Sale agreement. The actual Order of Taking will be before the City Council at its meeting on April 11th. The total purchase price is \$6 million. The remaining \$1.4 million is coming from Community Block Grant Funds.

Councilor Scott asked why there is an Order of Taking if it's a negotiated purchase and Counsel Salchert replied that the eminent domain procedure allows parties to agree on a price if there is an appraisal of the property performed, and in this case, the city has 2 appraisals done. The sale amount for this property is the approximate average of those 2 appraisals. The seller also had an appraisal that was higher than both of city's appraisals, so the final sale amount was negotiated. Director Galligani commented that in most circumstances of eminent domain, property is taken by force. This property was offered on the market and the city didn't want to take it forcibly.

Councilor Burnley commented that this is the beginning of creating a park and the city is committing itself to unearthing a very old area. Director Galligani stated that the city doesn't suspect that anything exceptional will be found at the site, but there may be a need to bring in additional fill to provide a cap in case some hazardous material is found. He said that the city is confident of what it's getting into, adding that there were no 'show stoppers' in the phase 1 ground assessment. Councilor Scott inquired about the 21E phase 1 site assessment and Director Galligani said that the property

owner has one from a couple years ago and the city did its own. The draft assessment has been presented but not accepted yet. Councilor Scott noted that state law requires a seller to clean up a property if it is found to be contaminated and Counsel Salchert said the city’s position is if an environmental conditions exist, the city has no intention to go after the seller since the property could still be used for park by bringing in fill to mitigate the contamination. The city is relying on the consultant’s report for the condition of land. Councilor Scott commented that he wants to be cautious in spending taxpayer money and he noted that contamination was found at Somerville High School and at Conway Park.

Chair Wilson was also concerned about potential financial risks to taxpayers and Director Galligani pointed out that MGL 21E was created 20+ years ago when there was no or little science to deal with contamination risks. He said that it’s standard practice, in cases of a park, to have 3 to 4 feet of fill piled over some contamination to make it safe for use while also protecting those who use it. He thinks that the nature of contaminates at Conway was such that it required more remediation than just capping with clean fill. Chair Wilson asked if it is possible that there may be something at this site as serious as what was found at Conway and Director Galligani replied that the city is not getting a signal from consultant to get a phase 2 assessment. Councilor Scott said he has been accused of managing details and at some point he has to have faith in city staff doing their jobs properly and Chair Wilson noted that creating open space in Somerville is probably going to involve acquiring parcels such as this. Councilor Burnley commented that he is 100% in favor of the city buying back the city.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

22. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-0335](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$2,300,000 from the Open Space and Acquisition Stabilization Fund to purchase the parcel at 508-512 Columbia Street.

Discussed with item# 24-0336

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

23. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0054](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$35,000 from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Fund Open Space Reserve to the Public Space & Urban Forestry Division for design of the Kennedy Schoolyard.

Director Inacio explained that this request is for an off cycle project for a universal playground at the Kennedy Schoolyard.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

24. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0276](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$10,000 from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Fund Historic Preservation Reserve to the Somerville Museum for preservation of assets in the museum's collections.

Director Inacio explained that this appropriation request was submitted some time ago and got lost in the shuffle. The item has since been re-voted and submitted here..

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

Grant and Gift Acceptances

25. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0274](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$1,873,000 grant with no new match required, from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to the Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development Housing Division for replacing windows in the Mystic River and Mystic View housing developments.

Director Inacio told the committee that these funds, secured by the city's congressional delegation, represent a straight pass-through to the Housing Authority. The funds will be used for window improvements, but due to increased costs, won't cover as many windows as originally planned. Councilor Clingan stated his desire to have the windows along Mystic Avenue upgraded first to provide relief from traffic noise.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

26. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0319](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$375,224 Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant with no new match required, from MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) to the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development Public Space and Urban Forestry Division for renovation and construction of Henry Hansen Park.

Director Inacio commented that this is another example of the city’s track record of getting park grants. This project has been in the pipeline for awhile and should be going out for bid soon, if it hasn’t not already. Because there is some grading work needed, the project may take a little longer to complete. Director Inacio will ask Director Franzen to contact Councilor Burnley to discuss his questions.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

27. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0414](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$76,867 grant with no new match required, from the Massachusetts Office of Elder Affairs to the Council on Aging for social, educational and physical wellness programming.

The administration has submitted a memo explaining this item.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

28. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0320](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$131,920 grant from the Department of Energy - Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program to the Office of Sustainability and Environment to partially fund the Argenziano LED conversion project.

The administration has submitted a memo explaining this item.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

- 29. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0334](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$79,500 grant with no new match required, from SFY2024 Massachusetts Municipal Public Safety Staffing Program to the Police Department for overtime to provide adequate shift coverage.

Director Delmonaco explained that the funds would pay for overtime and coverage for early voting on the upcoming election.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

- 30. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0333](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$24,150 grant that requires a match, from the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition Community Safety Initiative to the Police Department for youth violence prevention..

Discussed with Item# 24-0332.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE NOT APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
NAY: Ward Two City Councilor Scott and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.
ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

Transfers

- 31. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0332](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$8,050 from the Police Department Personal Services Overtime Account to the Police Department Special Items Grant Match Account to fund the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition Community Safety Initiative Shannon Grant match.

Discussed with Item# 24-0333.

Director Delmonaco told the committee that this is a required match for securing the grant referenced in Item# 24-0333. The funds would be used to support a variety of programs, e.g., youth sports, dialogue sessions with parents and at risk youth, patrols of hot spot areas, firearm violence, community outreach, etc.

Councilor Scott stated his intention to vote against this item.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE NOT APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
NAY: Ward Two City Councilor Scott and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: Ward Two City Councilor Sait

Orders

32. 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.

The administration has submitted a memo explaining this item. Director of Procurement and Contracting Services Angela Allen was not available to attend tonight’s meeting, so this item will be kept in committee. The committee would like to have staff from the Water and Sewer Department present to answer questions when this item is discussed by the committee on April 23rd. Councilor Scott would like to have the documents that are referenced in the item made available for review. He also commented that he’s getting several questions from constituents about the Water Department and said that the outsourcing of work is tremendously costly to the city. Councilor Clingan wants to have a conversation about bids, how many bidders participate, what is the city paying vs. previous bids for maintenance work. Chair Wilson raised the concern of what would happen if the city’s vacant water and sewer positions got filled during a period of time when the city was in a contract with a private vendor.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

33. Order
(ID # [24-0369](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Director update this Council on plans to allocate funds to implement a medical debt cancellation program.

Discussed with Item# 24-0326.
Director Satin-Hernandez informed the committee that the Atrius Equity Health Foundation will be allocating \$5.5 million to RIP Medical Debt to eliminate medical debt for residents of eastern MA, including Somerville. For that reason, the city will prioritize the Atrius funds rather than using ARPA funds to relieve medical debt.

Additional information is available here:

<https://www.atriusfoundation.org/medicaldebt> and here:

<https://hcfama.org/press-release-atrius-health-equity-foundation-announces-initiative-to-eliminate-nearly-500-million-in-medical-debt-in-eastern-massachusetts-february-28-2024/#:~:text=The%20Atrius%20Health%20Equity%20Foundation%20will%20grant%20national%20non%2Dprofit,more%20of%2>

0their%20annual%20income

<<https://hcfama.org/press-release-atrius-health-equity-foundation-announces-initiative-to-eliminate-nearly-500-million-in-medical-debt-in-eastern-massachusetts-february-28-2024/>>.

Director Satin-Hernandez stated that the city just found out in February that Atrius Health Equity Foundations was going to help with medical debt reduction. The city does not have to contribute any funds to the medical debt reduction program.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Resolutions

34. Resolution
(ID # [24-0326](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen and Councilor Wilson
That the Administration provide a written update to this Council on the status of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) spending to date.

Discussed with Item# 24-0369.

The administration has submitted memos explaining this item. Director Hartke gave an ARPA update presentation that covered ARPA program highlights and terminology, spending timelines and spending summaries, and management of ARPA funds. To date, \$37.2 million has been expended, \$21 million has been encumbered and \$13.1 million remains unexpended. Funds have been applied to 140 projects and over 60 community non profits have received funds. Director Hartke noted that data will be updated and available on the website: www.somervillema.gov/arpa
<<http://www.somervillema.gov/arpa>>

ARPA funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and spent by December 31, 2026. Any unspent funds must be returned to the U. S. Treasury Department, however, Treasury prefers that ARPA funds to be used by the deadline rather than be returned. Treasury has provided guidance saying that if funds aren't spent as a result of a vendor problem, or if a project comes in under budget, then those funds may be put towards another project.

Director Hartke explained the coordinating transfers process and said that the Evaluation Manager is focusing on relating how the funds were used. In addition to the required quarterly and closeout reports, evaluation of the impact of the project as a whole would include a public process.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2024-04-09 Memo (with 24-0337)
- Finance - 2024-04-09 Committee Memo (with 24-0414)
- Finance - 2024-04-09 ADS Extension 2024Apr03 (with 24-0193)
- Finance - 2024-04-09 Memo to Finance Committee - OSE (with 24-0320)
- Finance - 2024-04-09 ARPA_1 Memo to City Council (with 24-0326)
- Finance - 2024-04-09 ARPA_2 Update to City Council (with 24-0326)
- Finance - 2024-04-09 ARPA Status Report to City Council (with 24-0326)
- Finance - 2024-04-09 ARPA_3 YTD Expenditure Report_4.2.24 (with 24-0326)
- Finance - 2024-04-09 ARPA_4 YTD Expenditure_Personal Services accounts_4.2.24 (with 24-0326)