



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

October 12, 2016
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

| Attendee Name | Title | Status | Arrived |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------|---------|
| Tony Lafuente | Chair | Present | |
| Maryann M. Heuston | Vice Chair | Absent | |
| Katjana Ballantyne | Ward Seven Alderman | Present | |
| Matthew McLaughlin | Ward One Alderman | Absent | |
| William A. White Jr. | Alderman At Large | Present | |

Others present: Michael Glavin - OSPCD, Brad Rawson - OSPCD, Alan Inacio - OSPCD, Frank Wright - Law, Ed Bean - Finance, Tim Snyder - Mayor's Office, Rositha Durham - Clerk of Committees.

The meeting took place in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:10 PM by Alderman Lafuente and adjourned at 7:36 PM.

Approval of the September 21, 2016 Minutes

RESULT: ACCEPTED

197339: Requesting that the City-owned portion of 163 Glen Street be declared available for disposition.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

197852: Requesting an Order of Taking of real estate property at 515 Somerville Avenue to provide for the relocation of the Fire Department from its current facility in Union Square.

RESULT: PLACED ON FILE

197902: Requesting authorization to borrow \$4,875,000 in a bond, and appropriate the same amount for the acquisition of property to relocate the Fire Department from Union Square to 515 Somerville Avenue.

RESULT:

PLACED ON FILE

199247: That the Director of SPCD provide this Board with written responses to certain requests for residential and commercial data since 2010.

Alderman White would like a response within 2 weeks. This item has been before the committee since 10/14/15. Alderman White asked Mr. Snyder to monitor items needing responses, to ensure that they are provided in a reasonable time. This should be followed up on the committee agenda after the next BOA meeting.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

199250: Requesting an appropriation of \$445,000 and authorization to borrow that amount in a bond for a comprehensive planning effort for Assembly Square.

RESULT:

PLACED ON FILE

199255: Director of Housing conveying an outline of the "100 Homes" initiative and requesting the opportunity to present it to this Board at its earliest opportunity.

RESULT:

PLACED ON FILE

199297: That the Administration implement a PILOT program to promote partnerships with major local non-profit institutions for fair-value voluntary PILOTs.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

199305: That the Director of SPCD provide this Board with a comprehensive financial plan to develop Union Square, including expenditures to date and future costs, by early September.

Mr. Glavin stated that this request should be satisfied with the mayor's presentation at the Oct. 13, 2016 BOA meeting.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

199642: Requesting an appropriation of \$470,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund to fund a comprehensive citywide Mobility Plan.

RESULT:

PLACED ON FILE

199545: That the Finance Committee examine the impact of the continued practice of balancing the city's budget by raising property taxes to the maximum permitted under

Proposition 2 1/2, and explore ways for this Board to engage earlier in the budget process.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

199572: That any department that deviates from the expenditures provided as part of the Professional and Technical Services FY16 budget presentation notify this Board of that deviation.

Mr. Bean stated that departments are free to transfer money within their own departments. Alderman White feels it's important for the BOA to know of any deviation from the approved budget. Mr. Bean will generate a report and notify the BOA anytime a department goes above its budget, as was agreed to in a meeting by the Administration.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

199598: That the Director of SPCD provide the Finance Committee with the indirect and acquisition costs related to the proposed taking of 515 Somerville Avenue.

RESULT:

PLACED ON FILE

199863: That the Administration consider the development of a Tree and Bench donation program to supplement the City's investments in these areas.

There was discussion about donations for trees and possibly recognizing the donors on a plaque. Mr. Rawson will work with the Ward 2 alderman on this matter.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

200107: That the Director of SPCD explain to this Board, in writing, the comments discussed in the State SIP Report on the Green Line Extension.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

200064: That the Director of SPCD consult with the new management team at North Point and report back to this Board on their plans.

Mr. Glavin received very encouraging news regarding the development. There will be 2 commercial buildings, with one situated entirely in Somerville and the other one partially in Somerville. Building permits should be issued within the next 2 months. Alderman Ballantyne asked about the size of the buildings and the tax rate in Cambridge and which of the buildings will be on the Cambridge line. Alderman White asked Mr. Glavin to provide a full report, including the square footage, height and the number of floors of the buildings. Mr. Glavin also mentioned that the DLX discussions continue.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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200065: That the City Engineer provide this Board with the storm water policy and a discussion of the 4 to 1 plan.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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200066: That the City Treasurer provide this Board with Water and Sewer Enterprise Fund balance sheets and a report of water and sewer rates in the 15 largest MA communities.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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200196: That the Chief Assessor provide this Board with a breakdown of the residential exemption for 1, 2, 3 and 4 family homes, and the number owned by residents, and that this be provided annually going forward.

According to Mr. Bean, the assessor has already provided the information. He will have the assessor provide this information every spring.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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200413: Requesting acceptance of the fee interest in Parcel 34B, including portions of Great River Road, Assembly Row, Canal Street, and Foley Street, and all of Artisan Way.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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200481: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Finance report all expenditures for Union Square since the passage of the Union Square Redevelopment Plan, identifying those excluded and included in the Memorandum of Understanding with the Master Developer.

Alderman White asked that all written responses be sent to the BOA and the City Clerk to allow for public access.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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200592: That the Director of Personnel report to this Board June's employee vacancies and all hires since then.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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200593: That this Board discuss the two reports received from the Fire and Police Departments of tax exempt facilities and services rendered over a two year span.

Alderman White asked Mr. Snyder to follow up on this item and to send the responses to the committee.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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200614: Submitting the FY2016-FY2025 Capital Investment Plan.

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| RESULT: | PLACED ON FILE |
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200751: That the Chief Assessor provide this Board with the final breakdown of residential exemptions for the current fiscal year, by property type, with comparisons to prior fiscal years.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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200752: That the Administration provide assistance, including financial where appropriate, to resident homeowners whose property is damaged from the roots of trees planted by the City.

Mr. Snyder stated that there is a process to submit claims to the City Solicitor's office. Chairman Lafuente inquired about the number of residents who have submitted claims to the city and the outcomes of those claims.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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200796: Requesting authorization to borrow \$130,000 in a bond, and appropriate the same amount, to fund an Owners Project Manager for City Hall renovation work.

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| RESULT: | PLACED ON FILE |
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200873: That the Director of Personnel provide a salary and benefit projection for a full time arborist.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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200982: That the Superintendent of the Water and Sewer Enterprise Funds appear before the Finance Committee to discuss the policy of charging homeowners who request that their meter be checked when water bills are questioned.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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201098: Requesting an appropriation of \$52,000 from the Capital Stabilization Fund to conduct a Police Department Headquarters Feasibility Study.

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| RESULT: | PLACED ON FILE |
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201124: That the Director of Finance report the potential impact of the increase in Local Aid proposed by the Governor's FY2017 budget.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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201434: Requesting to appropriate \$750,000 from the CPA Fund Open Space and Recreation Land Reserve and Undesignated CPA Fund Balance for the creation of an Open Space Land Acquisition Fund, per the recommendation of the Community Preservation Committee.

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| RESULT: | PLACED ON FILE |
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201490: That the Director of Finance or the Director of Purchasing report to this Board on all contracts with Verizon and their value and length.

Mr. Bean stated this has been submitted.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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201527: Requesting the acceptance of certain Assembly Row streets as Public Ways, including Grand Union Boulevard and portions of Great River Road, Artisan Way, Canal Street, and Foley Street.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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201568: Requesting the acceptance of the non-union phase-1 salary recommendations of the Municipal Compensation Advisory Board.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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201661: That the Administration endeavor to provide \$250,000 for Teen Empowerment Youth Services in the proposed FY17 budget.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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201664: That the Administration provide a 3 year projection of bond requests, by project name, as of June 2016.

Mr. Glavin said this is related to a capital plan with a broader discussion on how it prioritized. The Administration will work with the new treasurer to discuss bonds. Alderman White spoke about debt services and what it does to property taxes and inquired if there is a state limit on debts.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

201745: Requesting the appropriation of \$200,000 from the Capital Projects Stabilization Fund for the Citywide Mobility Plan.

Alderman White requested an updated plan with updated map.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

201856: That the City Solicitor advise this Board on regulating Air BnB rentals through a possible local tax.

Mr. Snyder will have a full response scheduled for the next BOA meeting.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

201868: That the Director of Water and Sewer appear before this Board at its September 13 regular meeting to discuss the new base water charge, the reasons for its adoption, and why the Board was not informed of it during the budget meetings.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

201896: That the Director of Personnel provide an updated report of any and all positions filled and/or vacated since the FY17 budget discussions.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

202008: That the Director of Finance and the Superintendent of Water and Sewer provide this Board with the total costs associated with emergency water and sewer repairs for FY14, FY15 and FY16 by this Board's September 13 regular meeting.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

202026: That the Water Superintendent report to this Board on the imposition or suspension of water and sewer base charges for customers.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

202128: Requesting the acceptance and appropriation of an additional \$80,000 from US2 Associates into the Union Square Stabilization and Revitalization Fund.

RESULT: **APPROVED**

202129: Requesting an appropriation of \$80,000 from the Union Square Stabilization and

Revitalization Fund for services in connection with the redevelopment of Union Square.

Alan Inacio explained that the funds will be used to continue the services of outside counsel Jim Shea, relative to land disposition matters.

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| RESULT: | APPROVED |
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202154: Requesting approval of a transfer of \$140,000 in the Law Department, from the Judgments/Settlements Account to the Legal Services Account, for rendered and anticipated outside counsel services.

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| RESULT: | DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION |
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202155: Requesting a transfer of \$55,577 from the Salary Contingency Account to the SPCD Transportation and Infrastructure Personal Services Salaries Account to fund a Senior Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner.

Mr. Rawson and Mr. Snyder spoke about staffing turnover and hiring an arborist. There has been a pool of good candidates for the arborist position and an offer has been extended to an individual with management skills who has managed 8 arborists in the past and has tree committee experience. This is now a senior level position with a unique opportunity to accelerate growth. This item was approved with the condition that this will not bind the city to the position in next year's budget.

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| RESULT: | APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS |
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202153: Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$94,000 in a bond for additional design services for the West Branch Library Renovation Project.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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202157: That the Water Superintendent provide this Board with a report of the number of commercial customers that are being charged the residential rate, prior to this Board's next meeting on October 13, 2016.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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202158: That the Water Superintendent inform this Board about the State Law regarding 4 to 1 infiltration in-flow for water and sewer charges for large developments, and that the water and sewer fees for Assembly Row, Maxwell Green, and other large scale developments be provided as well.

Alderman White requested that a memo be provided, discussing the procedure, a description of what it means, when it was implemented by the city and how much revenue it has generated.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

202164: That the Director of Finance review with this Board a residential and commercial real estate tax bill, clearly identifying all additional fees that taxpayers are paying (e.g. CPA charge).

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

202165: That the Director of Finance discuss review with this Board a water/sewer bill for all rate payers (tiered), clearly identifying all additional fees that rate payers are paying (e.g. base monthly charge).

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

202156: Acting Director of Personnel responding to #201896 re: status of City vacancies.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

202135: Acting Water Superintendent responding to #202008 re: emergency water and sewer repairs in FY14-FY16.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

202080: Acting Water Superintendent submitting a Water & Sewer Enterprise Funds Financial Analysis and a Water & Sewer Rate Study.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

201747: Conveying an update on the Green Line Extension project.

RESULT: **WORK COMPLETED**

201539: Purchasing Director responding to #201490 re: current Verizon contracts.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

201444: City Assessor responding to #200751 re: residential exemption statistics.

RESULT: **WORK COMPLETED**

201268: Abutters to the West Branch Library submitting comments regarding its renovation.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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200353: City Assessor responding to #200196 re: residential exemption data.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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197611: Communicating information regarding the needed relocation of the Public Safety Building.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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