



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 23, 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 6:57 PM on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Clingan, Burnley, Sait and Wilson), none against and 1 absent (Councilor Scott).

Others present:

Special Counsel Catherine Lester Salchert – Law, Director Alan Inacio - OSPCD, Director Rich Raiche – Capital Projects, Director of Finance and Administration Julie Spurr-Knight – DPW, Commissioner Jill Lathan – DPW, 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, Ward Two City Councilor Naima Sait, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0484](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of April 9, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

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

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0412](#))

Requesting approval to appropriate \$302,720 from the Energy Stabilization Fund to use as a Green Communities grant match to fund energy improvements for 42 Cross Street.

The Administration has submitted a memo on this item.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

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

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0476](#))

Requesting authorization to borrow \$7,310,000 in a bond, and to appropriate the same amount for the FY 2024 Water Main Rehabilitation program as part of the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority's Local Water System Assistance Program.

Director Raiche explained that this year's target will be to clean and/or

replace 1.5 to 2 miles of pipe in East Somerville, in the area of the ‘State Aves’ to north on Broadway. This area was selected because a large amount of gas work has been done there and it makes more sense to do the infrastructure work prior to repaving those streets. The city will receive funds towards the repaving cost from the utility company. Normally, streets are selected by examining the performance of pipes and applying a risk probability test to them to determine the ones that are most in need of attention. Director Raiche told the committee that there are 125 miles of 100 year old pipe in the ground and that they have seem little to no maintenance for 100 years. The city has been repairing/upgrading the pipes for the past 7 years and commented that no extensive problems have been discovered that would cause the project to be expedited.

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

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0495](#))

Requesting authorization to borrow \$1,800,000 in a bond, and to appropriate the same amount for the annual recurring FY 2024 Sewer System Evaluation & Infiltration/Inflow Assessment.

Director Raiche said this involves sending cameras into pipes to examine their condition to alert the city about where pipe rehab may be needed. The city used to be in a reactive mode with sewer repairs but has since set up a 5-year program to inspect 40 miles of pipe per year. The focus this year will be on Ward 3 and at Assembly Square. An amount of funding is appropriated each fiscal year and the funds carry into following fiscal years, i.e., they overlap in their use. A short video about [Cleaning and Inspecting Somerville’s Sewers](#) may be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfasOD9VOvs>

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

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0492](#))

Requesting approval of a transfer of \$42,500 from the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) Housing Personal Services Account to the OSPCD Public Space and Urban Forestry Personal Services Account to cover a projected year-end salary deficit.

Director Inacio said that this was a routine item and explained that some projects were behind schedule and some accrued time payouts needed to be made. The Housing Division has some excess lag funds available and will use them to cover these costs. Any unused funds will go back into free cash.

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

6. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-0541](#))

Requesting approval of the Conveyance and Easement for Parcel D2.2 (Union Square) Civic Space Lot 2A.

Councilor Scott was recused from this item.
This item was discussed with ID# 24-0540
Counsel Salchert explained that this refers to civic space and that the city wants the property back under its control. That arrangement also benefits the developer since liability will fall to the city.

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

7. Mayor's Request
(ID # [24-0540](#))

Requesting approval of a pedestrian access easement on Charlestown Place, approval of a grant of easements over certain alleys located in the D2.2 parcel, and approval of a grant of license from the City to Union Square RELP.

Councilor Scott was recused from this item.
This item was discussed with ID# 24-0541
Counsel Salchert explained that this is to allow MBTA, bicycle, pedestrian and internal business access in the D2.2 parcel. She noted that the city has moved to using licenses instead of easements for any city property to allow the Engineering Department to change the layout of a street without the need to amend or terminate an easement. She also noted that public ways are the responsibility of the city, private ways are the responsibility of the D2 parcel owner, private parties are responsible for maintenance, alleys are privately owned, and that civic spaces are public spaces. Councilor Burnley inquired about the name of the park referenced in the documents and Counsel Salchert will get that information to him.

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

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0490](#)) Requesting approval to enter into an 84- and 89-month contract renewal term with Big Belly for existing equipment and deliverables, and enter into a new 96-month contract term with Big Belly for new units.
- Director Spurr-Knight told the committee that the city was approached by Big Belly about this and that under the terms of the contract, the city would receive 23 additional pedal activated units at no cost.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
9. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0489](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$493.08 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Fleet Motor Parts and Accessories Account for vehicle repair parts.
- Director Spurr-Knight said that during a vacancy in fleet management, these invoices fell through the cracks. Commissioner Lathan said that the vacancy just occurred a couple of weeks ago. Councilor Scott noted that the invoice was from July of 2023 and Commissioner Lathan explained that the error was discovered during an invoice cleanup.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
10. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0488](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$224.67 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Bituminous Supplies Account for the purchase of asphalt.
- Director Spurr-Knight said that this item has to do with escalation charges that had to be worked out. Apparently, those charges were not detailed on the invoices, preventing approval from the Auditing Department to pay them. (An escalation clause allows for the escalation of a certain price for labor or materials to be used to account for the potential fluctuation of material prices throughout the life of a project.)
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Two City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and Ward Four City Councilor Clingan
11. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0487](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$3,780 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Rental Buildings Account for the lease of conduit to carry Fire Alarm equipment.

Director Spurr-Knight said this is for rental of Fire Alarm conduit and that during a change in staff the billing process hit some snags, resulting in five years (2017 - 2022) of billing problems. The problem has since been corrected.

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

12. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0486](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$307.97 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Admin Postage Machine Rental Account for postage machine lease expenses.

Director Spurr-Knight told the committee that the invoice wasn't received until January of 2024.

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

13. Mayor's Request (ID # [24-0485](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$108,373.07 using available funds in the Department of Public Works Natural Gas Account for natural gas expenses.

Director Spurr-Knight told the committee that staff is reconciling energy accounts and trying to clean up prior year invoices. In researching this item, staff began with the original bill and learned that the charge was for use of modulars units during construction of Somerville High School. Although the city signed, bills were not received until 90 days later, resulting in several months of non-payment. The city is now paying the invoices on a 1 to 1 basis, i.e., each invoice is paid separately. Chair Wilson inquired about any impact on the budget and the Director said there will be an internal departmental transfer to cover this.

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

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2024-04-23 Memo to Finance Committee (with 24-0412)