
From: Susan Eldridge
Sent: Monday, June 20, 2022 10:42 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: City budget

Dear City Clerk,

I am writing regarding the recent city budget proposal. I would like to see money allocated for repaving our streets. They are in terrible shape and have been for many years. In fact Most streets in our city only get temporary patch jobs. Repaving would provide safer streets for cars and pedestrians as well as a less blighted appearance in our neighborhoods. I have been told in the past that we can't fix our streets because we need money from the federal government to do this. So now that we are receiving money via ARPA, I am hoping some of that money will be going towards a repaving project for the city. This project could also provide good paying jobs, if we can give them to Somerville residents.

I would also like to see some money going toward fixing our rat problem. It's nice that the city started a program to help with this. But it is my understanding that the city does not have the resources it needs support all the residents who have been requesting help. They also are not able to do any follow up. Councilor Charlotte Kelly had a pretty good plan. I like the idea of using a non toxic method to get rid of rats instead of using rat poison, which can affect other forms of wildlife like hawks and eagles.

I also want to say that I was pleased to hear that money will be allocated to support more social workers. Police are not equipped to deal with mental health crises. Having a social worker who could better handle a situation and deescalate before it gets out of control sounds like a much better strategy.

This last comment is not directly related to the budget but it would be good if there was a better way to notify residents about the budget, how to access it, and when public hearings are taking place. I happened to hear about it by chance via Council member JT Scott's social media posts. But I don't recall anyone else mentioning it. Maybe some money could be allocated toward this as well.

Sincerely

Susan Eldridge
79 Raymond Avenue

PS: I have attached some photos of my street. These are just 2 areas on my street. But the entire street looks like this. As do most others in Somerville including Highland Avenue, Broadway, and PowderHouse Boulevard, etc.



Sent from my iPhone

From: Anthony Parks
Sent: Saturday, June 18, 2022 8:37 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: public safety in davis sq.

Dear City Council,

I am curious to know if there is a long term plan to improve public safety in Davis Sq. Since the dissolution of Mass and Cass, there has been an increasing presence of drugs and what I would broadly classify anti-social behavior in Davis (e.g. fighting, shouting, hostility). This unfortunately has culminated in multiple overdoses and a stabbing in Davis two weeks ago. What is the city doing to address this issue? I know longer feel safe walking around Davis. I understand there is a political hesitance to use police force, but can you provide us with a real alternative? What do we as taxpayers pay for if not first to provide for a safe, clean environment to live in?

Is there anything we can do? I don't believe this is an affordable housing problem - these are not residents who have fallen on hard times. These people are exploiting the fact that Somerville has very lax policies around loitering and policing, and have set up camp in Somerville because they believe that we as a community will do nothing because it is politically complicated (for this particular town).

In particular, I think one specific thing you can address today is to completely alter the concrete fixture in front of the 7-11. It is a long, tall, wide, flat concrete structure. It is a common place for people to sit on, lie down on, and mostly sell drugs in front of.

If this structure were altered in such a way as to make it difficult to hang around for long periods of time, it would discourage people from gathering there. There are plenty of other benches. Yes this is known as hostile architecture but I believe this is the bare minimum we can do as a city short of asking people to simply leave, you can at least discourage them from staying.

Sincerely,
Anthony P.

From: Michael Bono
Sent: Friday, June 17, 2022 4:53 PM
To: Mayor; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Comment on the Somerville budget proposal: prioritize funding of public health infrastructure to decrease COVID-19 transmission

Dear Mayor Ballantyne and City Councilors,

My name is Michael Bono, and I have been a Somerville resident since 2015. I am writing to urge you to prioritize spending on urgently needed public health measures to decrease COVID transmission, especially spending from the remaining relief funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. In particular, I am urging you to fund increased COVID PCR testing and upgrading air ventilation and purification in Somerville buildings.

The pandemic has not gone away, with new Omicron variants spreading and cases surging in many communities, including Somerville. Vaccines are an incredible tool for decreasing deaths and hospitalizations, but our current vaccines are not sufficient to limit COVID transmission, and we must invest in public health infrastructure instead of wishful thinking that we can manage COVID entirely through individual risk assessment.

In the week before President Biden's mistaken encouragement on May 13th to spend remaining COVID relief funds on hiring police officers, more of my friends and loved ones contracted COVID than in any other week of the pandemic. Every person I knew who contracted COVID was vaccinated and boosted, and every one of them had done their best to be careful and avoid catching COVID.

Increased COVID PCR testing and upgrading air ventilation and purification are public health investments that will protect the health of Somerville residents and are well-suited to funding at the city level. The city of Somerville used to provide free COVID PCR testing to residents with and without COVID symptoms, but at the height of the recent surge I was disappointed to discover that PCR testing through the city has been reduced to a limited number of appointments for Somerville residents who are symptomatic or known close contacts of someone who is COVID-positive. Rapid antigen tests are a valuable addition to our public health toolkit, but they lack the sensitivity of PCR tests and many positive rapid test results are not included in COVID monitoring data. Resuming widespread access to PCR testing is vital to ensuring that we as a city have an accurate picture of current COVID caseloads in order to inform both collective and individual risk management measures, as well as ensuring that individual Somervillians have access to testing in order to ensure that they minimize the chances of infecting those around them.

Moreover, we urgently need a citywide investment in air ventilation and purification in order to decrease the rate of COVID transmission, especially in the wake of the Board of Health's mistaken decisions to remove the city's indoor mask mandate in early March and not reinstate them when COVID cases began rising again shortly afterwards. Air purification and ventilation is an effective method for decreasing airborne COVID transmission, with a recent Italian study showing that adequate ventilation (defined as at least six air replacements per hour) can decrease COVID cases in schools by more than 80%. Providing funds for public spaces such as schools and healthcare facilities to upgrade air ventilation and purification will help keep those spaces safe for students, teachers, patients, and healthcare providers. In addition, providing funds to local bars and restaurants to upgrade air purification and ventilation will make it safer for Somervillians to visit some of our most beloved local businesses and protect local staff from COVID transmission at work. Ideally, this funding would be accompanied by a certification process, so that Somervillians, especially those who are high-

risk in the case of COVID infection, could know from signage which businesses and public buildings have measures in place to ensure clean air and decreased risk of airborne COVID transmission.

The current national strategy of individual COVID management has been a resounding failure, and we must change course and recommit to an investment in desperately needed public health infrastructure. To continue the current COVID strategy is nothing less than an abandonment of Somervillians to mass infection. If we continue this course, residents of our city will continue to risk death and growing numbers will experience Long COVID, a range of long-term health conditions including chronic fatigue, diabetes, neurological conditions, and cardiovascular damage. Vaccines decrease but do not eliminate the risk of Long COVID, and there is growing evidence that millions of Americans have become disabled due to Long COVID since the beginning of the pandemic.

In allocating the new Somerville budget, I urge the mayor and council to not approve any increase in the police budget. Hiring more police will do nothing to prevent COVID transmission, and the tragedy of the Uvalde school shooting has made it abundantly clear that hiring more police will not protect us from violence either. I urge the mayor and city council to direct remaining relief funding to public health infrastructure instead. The American Rescue Plan Act was passed to enable us to defeat the pandemic, and right now the most pressing use for remaining funding is public health measures such as testing, air ventilation, and air purification.

Sincerely,

Michael Bono, PhD

From: Gordon Marx
Sent: Wednesday, June 15, 2022 5:49 PM
To: All City Council; City Clerk Contact; Mayor
Subject: SPD budget hearing

Mayor Ballantyne and City Councillors:

I am writing to oppose any increase in the SPD budget. A study from ... 2003? 2004? said that we had too many police officers and needed to civilianize these functions. Why is Mayor Ballantyne *increasing* the budget? This is nonsensical.

Additionally, don't build the police station on Washington Street.

Figure out how to put it at the Circuit City site and build dense, affordable, and ACCESSIBLE housing near Union Square.

Cheers,
Gordon Marx
11 Bowdoin St.
Somerville, MA 02143

From: C Benson
Sent: Friday, June 10, 2022 12:24 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: NO to defunding the police and NO to the safe injection site in Davis Sq.

City of Somerville,

NO to defunding the police and NO to the safe injection site in Davis Sq.

Could they pick a worse time to defund Police with crime on the rise in Somerville?

A knife fight in Davis Square and a dead body not touched for days. So let's have an injection site where more homeless and drug addicts can hang around and pan handle after getting stoned/high safely.

No to both.
Christopher Benson
Ward 7
24 Endicott Ave

From: Alex Frieden
Sent: Thursday, June 9, 2022 2:35 PM
To: All City Council; Mayor; City Clerk Contact
Subject: feedback on budget

Dear City Council and the Mayor of Somerville,

I wanted to give the following feedback on the proposed budget. Some of the feedback may reflect the view of larger groups that I am part of but this feedback is specifically from me:

- In the budget, installation of flexi-pave is touted as the way to achieve and maintain ADA compliance; advocates have been clear that installing trees in bump-outs or substantially widening sidewalks is needed to create and maintain accessibility for wheelchair users.
- Lack of increased funding for monitoring of alternate accessible pedestrian routes during all construction
- In general, I think we believe money spent on mobility consultants would be better spent investing in permanent in-house expertise. Mobility for example has budgeted \$355k for "professional and technical services", compared with their own total staff budget of \$695k. Expertise is the same every year -- we know we're going to need that same expertise year after year, and we could be investing in growing and/or hiring those skills within the department.
- I find it questionable that Mobility and Highway are far away from each other in the org chart, and that we attach big progressive goals to Mobility but only give Mobility control over \$1M compared to Highway's \$4M.
- ISD's budget is insufficient to cover ADA enforcement issues
- Roads and sidewalks in Somerville are in need of a lot of work. OSPCD Mobility in the past year spent \$87,056 and had \$365,000 [budgeted](#) for professional and technical services. I want to see more money going towards mobility, however I am concerned with the difficulty of spending that money. All of this money is intended for street resurfacing and mid year mobility studies ([link here](#)). I would like to see street resurfacing and repaving brought back under city control so Somerville does not have to do complicated bid packages and can instead oversee street and sidewalk reconstruction ourselves.
- It is unacceptable with the current state of schools that we are only funding more studies. We need to fund short term fixes now as well as long term studies. It is disappointing to see such few dollars going to schools compared to what the needs of students are. At this point, most have seen the [disturbing story](#) from a para at the winter hill school. I would ask our elected officials to fund schools and invest in education to an acceptable level before other progressive investments are made.

Looking forward to see the output of the budget process

--

Alexander Frieden

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, June 8, 2022 6:58 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Fwd: Please do not defund our police

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Jun 8, 2022 at 6:27 PM
To: citycouncil <citycouncil@somervillema.gov>
Subject: Fwd: Please do not defund our police

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Jun 8, 2022 at 6:23 PM
To: citycouncil <citycouncil@somervillema.gov>
Subject: Please do not defund our police

I am a resident at 23 electric ave . My name is Larry Mulrey. I have worked over the years with the west somerville community school. I was the Human Resource Director for Johnnies Foodmaster for over 30 years. On working with the school we supplied many donations of food and supplies to help the school with fundraisers etc I served on a committee with the school along with alderman jim Halloran as well as a community police officer and several members of the local school community. Having a community officer in board gave all the kids and teachers a strong sense of safety as the officer participated in many activities such a bike safety and the wearing of helmets and proper attire. This officer helped many kids to learn to get along with one another and always stayed during the school day in and around the school and the kids felt safe being in his presence. Today with all these shootings in schools taking place we need the police presence in the school more today then ever.I strongly ask for you to take a strong stand for our kids safety and think about adding more police security to each and every school in this city. I supported this school many times in the past and now have two of my grandkids in the west somerville school . I hope that you as a member of our city council will speak up and take a stand to protect our kids. We have already had four incidents in this school with gun threats. Lets do something to make sure we do everything in your power to protect our kids. We need to be proactive and support our police in your schools.I know I will !! Thanks Larry Mulrey

From: Lydia Wright
Sent: Wednesday, June 8, 2022 1:22 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Fund the police

My name is Lydia wright . We need police back in the schools , they need so much more funding . Please . I have children in the schools and we need to fund them to keep not just our streets safe but our children.

Thank you

Sent from my iPhone

From: Christine Doherty
Sent: Wednesday, June 8, 2022 1:19 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Police

Hello:

I am a ward 1 resident and also a lifelong Somerville resident. I am writing to let you know that I am strongly OPPOSED to defunding the police. MORE money should be allocated to the Somerville Police Department. Take yesterday's stabbing in Davis Square for example, it was the police who were called and not a social worker. Policing of our city is extremely important. Shootings and violent crimes in our city seem to be up. Why would anyone ever think it would be a good idea to have less policing? Please, as a Somerville resident, I would like to feel safe in the city I call home.

Thank you,
Christine Doherty
445 Artisan Way
Somerville, MA 02145

From: Devon Halley
Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 9:38 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Comments on the 2022 Proposed Budget

Hello,

My name is Devon Halley and I have been a resident of Somerville for over 10 years.

Our streets are in ruins.
Our sidewalks are a shambles.
Our sewers are crumbling.
Winter Hill and Brown Schools are falling down around our children's ears.

Increasing the police budget by ~8% (the largest increase in a decade!) is an absolute embarrassment. It clearly shows the priorities of the mayor do not align with the needs of her electorate.

The biggest embarrassment of all is how far we are along with this needless new Public Safety Building while our Winter Hill and Brown Schools degenerate into ruins. The mayor is making the wrong choices. Recent events in the country have proven you cannot fix society's problems by throwing money at the cops and their expensive toys.

Claw that money back so that it can be spent on what Somerville actually needs: infrastructure and support staff for the city employees. The City Council deserves a living wage. Our neighbors deserve better translation services. And if remote meetings are going to continue (as they should, for accessibility reasons!) it's becoming clear the city needs to hire someone to provide A/V and IT support and training for them.

Thank you,
Devon

From: Priscilla Melo
Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 11:53 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Comment on the Mayor's Proposed Budget

Hello!

I was unable to attend last night's public comment meeting, but would still like to submit my comment via email. My name is Priscilla Melo and I am a homeowner in Magoun Square.

I would like to thank Mayor Ballantyne for her proposal to substantially increase the Somerville Public Schools budget, as well as the proposed increases in funding for resident mental health services, and the focus on building a better-run, more accessible, inclusive, and transparent government with the investments in IT infrastructure and the new Office of Accessibility, Transparency, and Access. I think these investments are necessary for a thriving Somerville!

However, I am disappointed in the proposed \$1.4 million increase in the Somerville Police Department budget. We should instead be directing this money to departments and programs that more effectively improve public safety, like the Department of Public Works that repair our buildings and streets and the Vision Zero program for safer streets. Our city budget is a statement of our priorities and values, and I strongly believe we should NOT be prioritizing police.

Many thanks,

Priscilla Melo


From: Elizabeth Caffrey
Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 11:50 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Cc: Mayor
Subject: Budget Commentary

To everyone,

A few bullet points regarding the budget:

- **SCS:** There needs to be more work done regarding the Safe Consumption Site. After reading the study report, there are numerous and glaring issues not only with the data collection but also in the conclusions drawn. Given that this is new, I think more time and consideration needs to be taken. Please note I am also against it coming to Somerville after speaking to Canadians with actual lived experiences of SCS. That aside, the limitations even stated by the writers of that report should have everyone pause and reflect.
- **Buildings:** It is difficult to tease out which capital projects are prioritized and I would love to see more money spent on improving school buildings.
- **Public Spaces:** We need more money to better maintain green spaces and would love to see more money spent on filling all spades with native pollinators. Also would love to see money spent on programs to decrease BSW and Japanese Knotweed in public spaces.
- **Recreation/Teen Center:** We need to treat our youngest residents better. We need more and varied Rec programming. We need a teen/community center. We need more parks and playgrounds. More facilities.

Thank you,
Elizabeth Caffrey
71 Alpine St

From: Kevin Foster
Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 11:05 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Public Comment

Good afternoon,

I am writing to submit the spoken comment I gave yesterday, June 6th 2022. Text is below.

Good evening to the council,

My name is Kevin Foster, I am a ward 3 resident. It has at this point become nearly a rote phrase that budgets are moral documents. But it bears remembering what budgets can, at their best, do for people. They can feed people. They can help people stay in their homes and community. They can give new opportunities. They can keep people alive and thriving. In short, this budget is not that and I would say this is an immoral document that does not align with my morals or views of progress.

For example, a non-police response to mental health crisis is NOT in this budget despite this being a priority of this council. The fact there is not even a study on this shows me how low it is on this admin's priorities. When Denver, a city with a population 715,000 people and 154 sq miles, created STAR for their non-police response the pilot cost around \$250K. The city of Somerville, a city with 80,000 people and 4 sq miles is spending over \$200K in this budget for police body cams that do not even have clear policy around them. I think this money is better served away from body cameras and actually implemented as an alternative non police response to emergencies.

I also want to mention the six vacant officer positions funded for 1 month. I believe those should be cut completely. The reimaging policing process continues to remain amorphous without any real benchmarks or goals. Based on the CAPM fiasco a few months ago of trying to hire for three of these positions. I do not believe this administration can be trusted with having these six positions waiting for a staffing study that will probably be delayed another year. If the administration feels these positions are necessary, they can come back to this council for a midyear appropriation.

Briefly, I will say it is a moral failure that our schools, especially the Winter Hill school, are outright unsafe environments for anyone to be in yet the city is moving forward with a \$100 million police station. A study is not urgent enough, action is needed to actually fix or build a new Winter Hill School.

Also, the \$100K for Office of Accountability Transparency and Access seems to be tailored to people like me and a dozen others who are active on Twitter and no offense to any of my fellow posters, but I think the city could use \$100K elsewhere.

Best,
Kevin

From: Darci Hanna
Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 10:59 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Cc: Mayor; Matthew McLaughlin; Ben Ewen-Campen; strezoatlarge@gmail.com; Willie Burnley, Jr.; Charlotte Kelly; Jake Wilson; JT Scott; Jesse Clingan; Beatriz Gomez-Mouakad; Lance Davis; judyforward7@gmail.com
Subject: Urgent Need for Winter Hill School Repairs

Honorable Mayor and City Councilors,

I'm writing to add my support for the teachers, administrators, and staff who have asked for your urgent help in immediately repairing and, if it can't be made fully functional, making plans to replace the Winter Hill Community Innovation School as soon as possible.

My children attend the school. Not long after my oldest was in preK there, she came home one day and told me, "Mama, there's a waterfall in my school. It's on the staircase." The stairwell had flooded from either a roof or plumbing issue and the kids couldn't use the stairs.

My oldest child also goes to El Sistema at the East Somerville Community School and when I asked her if she liked that building, she responded, "It's too new, it doesn't even look like a school." She has been at WHCIS long enough that she equates crumbling infrastructure with Somerville schools. Her classroom hit 91 degrees recently and she said her teacher gave them a break from their lessons because none of the students could concentrate in the stifling room.

My youngest cried repeatedly when the library was closed this year because of serious leaking and water damage, and worried (not unreasonably, given how long it took) that it wouldn't be repaired and that they wouldn't ever have a library there again.

There are rat droppings in my oldest child's classroom and my youngest came home last week saying that when they entered the classroom one morning, a rat was trapped on a sticky trap in the room and "shaking and squeaking," upsetting all the students and derailing the morning's lesson. I understand the difficulties of rodent problems in old buildings, especially one with a cafeteria and crumbs from students, but the current infestation needs more attention. It's unacceptable, unsanitary, and distracting for students.

When I was in the building this year to help a student photograph their work to apply for the Boston Arts Academy, we had trouble locating functional outlets. Several were bare and missing the outlet covers and one had prominent scorch marks around it. I also had trouble sharing the images because the WiFi was unreliable throughout the school. At a bare minimum, teachers need outlets and WiFi to have fully functional classrooms for their students.

The caring people who have to work in the building go out of their way to help the students learn and grow, but the working and learning conditions there have deteriorated and it's beyond time to focus as much effort and money on the problems there as possible. The WHCIS employees can only do so much, it's time for the city to acknowledge their decades of failures in maintaining the building and take immediate steps to resolve these serious issues.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this problem,
Darci Hanna
36 Wigglesworth St.
Ward 1
WHCIS parent

From: Jessie Grogan
Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 10:40 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Cc: Mayor; Jake Wilson; Jesse Clingan; Tim Armstrong
Subject: Testimony from last night's budget meeting regarding funding Winter Hill school's capital needs



[Jessie Grogan Finance Committe testimony June 6...](#)

Good morning,

I would like to share the written (and slightly longer) version of the testimony I gave last night at the finance committee meeting.

Thank you all for your hard and thoughtful work putting together a budget that balances many competing priorities.

Please consider adding just one more to the list!

Best,

Jessie Grogan

13 Sargent Ave #2

June 6, 2022

Testimony to Somerville City Council Finance Committee regarding Winter Hill Community Innovation School building capital needs in the FY23 budget

Hi, my name is Jessie Grogan. I'm an 18-year resident of Somerville and I've lived in Winter Hill for the last seven of those years. I'm also the parent of a Winter Hill Community Innovation School Kindergartener. I'm speaking tonight on behalf of myself and my husband, Tim Armstrong. Our daughter started school during the pandemic, so she went to school first virtually then at the high school. She didn't get into the Winter Hill building until last fall, and we as parents didn't actually go into the school until last month (except to vote, where I voted for several of you). As a result, throughout the pandemic my opinion of the school has been shaped by its teachers and administrators, and we thought it was EXCELLENT. The people who work at Winter Hill are spectacular and should all be given raises. But unfortunately that's not the budgetary item I'm here to talk about today.

As with many parents of younger children at our school, we have only recently learned about the inadequate and frankly quite troubling condition of Winter Hill's building. As I'm sure you know, the school has been excessively hot this spring (a terrible condition under which to try to teach and learn), and has been plagued by leaks, broken elevators and bathrooms, falling ceiling tiles, and other totally unacceptable distractions from our students' and teachers' jobs to learn and teach. As you also know, the Winter Hill School serves a higher need student population than the general population, which means the city should be especially focused on lowering barriers to student learning. Excessive heat and a crumbling building serve as additional obstacles for students, many of whom have already had more than their fair share.

We are concerned that the budget as proposed does not include specific funding for urgently needed fixes to the Winter Hill school building. As we understand it, the proposed budget contains \$850,000 for school buildings, broken into two categories: a citywide needs assessment and upgrades to HVAC systems at schools across the city. While we hope that some of those HVAC upgrades will solve Winter Hill's excessive heat issues, the budget as proposed does NOT allocate any specific dollars for urgently needed fixes to our school building on any kind of reasonable timeline.

In a time where our municipal budget is benefiting from unprecedented federal investment, we can do more. **We ask that Winter Hill be prioritized for a needs assessment and the development of a capital improvement plan, and the amount allocated for school**

facilities be increased to address at least Winter Hill's most acute problems while a longer-term plan is being developed.

We are a city that believes in community, and in taking care of one another, particularly the most vulnerable among us. Who in our community is more vulnerable than our children, particularly those with learning disabilities or who are learning English? We think the city should put its money where its mouth is and make sure that – at the very least – all students in our community have a safe and comfortable place to learn. Thank you.

Jessie Grogan and Tim Armstrong

13 Sargent Ave #2

Jessie: [REDACTED]

Tim: [REDACTED]

From: Lauren Godles Milgroom
Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 10:19 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Cc: Mayor; judyforward7@gmail.com
Subject: Comments for Public Hearing - Asking You NOT to Increase Police Funding

Good morning,

My name is Lauren Milgroom, and I live in Ward 7. I was unable to attend the public meeting last night, but I am extremely disappointed to learn that the proposed budget includes increased funding for the police. I understand that the proposed increase in police funding is the largest percent increase in over a decade, and I find this completely unacceptable, given that the money is sorely needed in other areas, including our schools and affordable housing. I hope that you will reconsider this part of the budget and demonstrate your commitments to the progressive values you claimed to uphold during your campaigns.

Thank you very much for your attention to this important matter.

Best,
Lauren

From: Rosa Carson
Sent: Tuesday, June 7, 2022 10:10 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Cc: Lance Davis; Jake Wilson; Charlotte Kelly; Willie Burnley, Jr.; strezoatlarge@gmail.com; Mayor
Subject: proposed FY23 budget increase in funding for police

Good morning,

I'm writing to express my strong disagreement with Mayor Ballantyne's proposal to increase funding to the Somerville Police Department by over 8% in the 2023 budget.

Studies show that increasing funding to police does not make a community safer. The fact that the proposal has no provision for civilian oversight nor a strong policy to guide the work of the police department makes me very nervous. Police are here to deal with the aftermath of crime. Let's invest in creating conditions that allow people to live without having to commit crimes to make their lives livable.

The way to keep Somerville wonderful is to invest our money in community focused efforts, including increasing funding to the OHS' Tenant Organizing Grant to hire additional bilingual organizers -- this invests directly in the community and keeping the community strong. Somerville is made of people, and that's where I want us to put our money and efforts.

We have plans for a supervised consumption site. Let's smooth the way for that to happen as quickly as possible -- this is an effort that will have a direct lifesaving impact.

I love Somerville, and that's why I want us to invest in what makes it wonderful, not in the fear that drives investment in police and policing.

Thank you,
Rosa Carson
773 Broadway
[REDACTED]

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As part of my resistance to grind culture, I'm working to cultivate spaciousness, so I may take several days to respond to emails.

[REDACTED]


From: Lynn McKay
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 8:45 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Comments on the City Budget

To the city clerk of Somerville to be relayed to the city council,

As a Ward 6 voter who has been a part of the concerted call to reduce funding to the police and reinvest that money in the community for the past two years, it is infuriating to see yet another budget that seeks to address the problems this city faces with an even more inflated police budget, that still doesn't pay everyone in the city's employ a living wage, and that funds studies but no action on problems that have been known to the city for years at least.

A shiny new public safety building won't make anyone safer. Fixing the dangerous conditions at Winter Hill School will. Implementing a supervised consumption site will - the evidence from other communities is clear on that point. Carefully considering options for the best long-term outcome is a reasonable course much of the time, but not when it comes before doing what needs to be done to stop the bleeding.

Sincerely and emphatically,
Lynn McKay

From: Rowan Lovell
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 7:52 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Budget Comments

Hi! I'm Rowan and I live in ward 6 near Davis Square. All I have to add about the budget is what many people have said way more eloquently: There's so, so many better things we could do with our money than give it to the police. I know the council can only cut, so please use that as hard as you can to get the point across. Thanks so much for all your work!

--

Rowan "Red" McKay | they/them [\(what's this?\)](#)

From: Adrienne Sands
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 7:32 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: against the proposed police budget increase

To whom it may concern,

I am a Somerville resident (179 College Ave, Somerville MA 02144), and I do not support the proposed \$1.3 million increase to the police budget. As written, Mayor Ballantyne's budget goes directly against my progressive values, which the city also claims to uphold.

Regards,

Adrienne Sands, Ph.D.
MIT Lincoln Laboratory

From: Sam Alterman
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 6:33 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Comment on FY22 Budget

Dear Honorable City Council Members,

I want to highlight for you several key issues with the FY2023 budget presented by Mayor Ballantyne.

First, I am once again asking you to cut the six vacant patrol officer positions in the Police Department. While the budget claims these positions are “pending the staffing study and reimagine policing,” from a budgetary perspective there is no such thing as a conditional position. The purpose is clearly to once again try to sneak an expansion of policing past the Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters committee like what we saw in April. Dealing with staffing shenanigans is a poor use of council time and resources, and there is no reason to keep these positions around enabling said shenanigans.

Second, I am urging you to cut the over \$200k in the Police Department budget that is related to purchasing and implementing body worn cameras. The City of Somerville had video of a police officer pepper spraying a handcuffed civilian, sat on it for a year, and then lied about whether that officer was still being paid. Implementing body cameras now, when we don’t even have so much as a plan for implementing civilian oversight, is a farce. Additionally, the body worn camera policy negotiated between the City and the Somerville Police Employees Association is absolutely egregious: it specifically states that disciplinary actions are not the purpose of body worn cameras, states that recordings can only be examined with permission of the Chief of Police and guarantees officers can review recordings before submitting reports or testifying. Implementing body cameras with this policy, which has had no input from the public or the city council, will simply work to create the appearance of reform while doing nothing to curb the power of police. The \$200k allocated towards this initiative is an exceptionally poor use of funds that would better serve the community if allocated to the OHS tenant organizing grant.

Finally, I don’t think I need to tell you that Somerville is a city with so many unmet needs. Our schools are in terrible and unsafe condition, particularly the Winter Hill Community Innovation School, which disproportionately serves students of color and students with special needs. Our streets are dangerous for bikers and pedestrians. Mental healthcare is getting more and more inaccessible to more and more residents. Many of these are issues that this council identified as priorities, but Mayor Ballantyne’s budget fails to take action on any of them beyond studies and a single managerial position. We don’t need more studies, we need action. We need a government that provides services to the community rather than paying consultants to decide if we should do anything. Our neighbors are dying of overdoses while we drag our feet on a Safe Consumption Site because the mayor is afraid of alienating the wealthy homeowners in Ward 7 who elected her. This council must fight for a more just and equitable budget that uses the massive influx of free cash to serve the people of Somerville rather than more managers and communications staffers in city hall. It is often said that budgets are moral documents, a statement of our values. If we want that to be true, this council needs to take a stand and tell Mayor Ballantyne that it is time for action.

Sam Alterman
639 Somerville Ave, Apt 1

From: Ethan Contini-Field
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 5:06 PM
To: City Clerk Contact; Mayor; All City Council
Subject: Funding for Winter Hill School and Community Schools

Dear Mayor Ballantyne and the City Council (cc: City Clerk for public comment),

I'm writing as a constituent and as the parent of two students at Winter Hill Community Innovation School. I would like to see more funding for immediate repairs at the school, and a long-term plan for building maintenance in the school system in general. I would also like to see better underwriting of Somerville Community Schools.

My kids have come home and told me it was hot at school, or that all the water fountains are broken, or that "we didn't have library today because the roof caved in". But they're sometimes given to hyperbole, and since this is the only school they've ever been in, they don't have anything to compare it to. So I was shocked to read the letter, signed by almost everyone who has ever taught or aided my children, and to hear the testimony at the May 26 meeting about the deplorable state of the building. The staff at the school are fantastic, but nobody should be required to teach or learn in such a situation.

I appreciate that the Mayor has budgeted \$500k for "a plan"... but I have concerns that we will hire a consultant and carefully study the problem for 8 months, only to be told the very things the teachers are telling us about right now. I don't think you need a comprehensive plan to ask the WHCIS staff what the top priority fixes are for *this summer* that would make the building more hospitable in September. We should do immediate repair *and* plan for the long-term future.

I worked for SomerStat in 2007-08, and what I most appreciated about it was the systematic approach: Instead of just waiting for things to break and then scrambling to fix them, SomerStat helped the city be more proactive about the way departments managed their assets. I'm disappointed that, 15 years later, we still don't have a proactive policy for caring for our school buildings.

I think a big part of this is the City-School schism about school buildings. During the pandemic we all became acutely aware that while SPS uses the buildings, the city has authority over the buildings. This means there's very little direct communication between the people who use the buildings every day and the people who have the authority to maintain them. Maybe part of a long-term plan could be to tap individual city-side facilities managers to meet regularly with the staff of individual schools so they can accelerate necessary maintenance.

Finally: I would like to see the city or SPS underwrite Somerville Community Schools afterschool programming. Currently, they have a zero-based budget, meaning they can only hire as many staff as they think they can pay with registrations. This leads to huge lead time deadlines for registering for programs, and SCS staffing for what they think is the minimum number of kids, so they don't over-staff and lose money. Lots of families are shut out when registration fills up within ten minutes of opening. If the City/SPS would underwrite the SPS programming, acting as a funding backstop, SCS would be able to hire more people in advance and guarantee more spots -- and they might well break even anyway.

Thank you for your time and service to our community.

Ethan Contini-Field
215 Summer Street #1
[REDACTED]

From: Andrew Laobak
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 4:27 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: City Budget 2022

A new year and a new mayor but one might not even notice given how familiar the situation of the city budget stands.

Is it a surprise to anyone that it is the police force that is receiving one of the largest budget increases?

The promised studies and reports on force sizes and re-imagining policing have been forgotten or buried. The public outcry and petitions against more funding for police are ignored. The desperate need across the community to help deal with the crises of covid, affordable housing, and addiction are relegated to tiny line items, while the police are set to receive MILLIONS more in funding.

This is a tragedy. Lives that could be saved will be lost because of this budget decision. The most vulnerable in our community will be forced out - leaving for housing they can afford. But every cop will get a nice big salary and fancy new technology they can use to further surveil the public without any civilian oversight. Nearly every week a new story comes out about police abuse of body camera footage. It is pure fantasy to believe that giving the SPD body camera is doing anything but giving them more power. Again and again police are shown to be liars, corrupt, and failures at the one thing they claim to do "protect and serve." The Somerville police are no different - stop giving them more money.

Update Somerville's public buildings. Pay Somerville's teachers more. Build the green space we've been promised for years. Spend money on programs to help those battling addiction. Spend money to ensure that Somerville has more affordable housing. There are dozens of ways that the literal millions of dollars you all are considering giving to the police could be better spent. Ways that would actually improve the quality of life, safety, and health of our citizens.

The budget process is a sham. The mayor has nearly all the power in this situation and outside of some extreme circumstances will not face democratic accountability for years. The City Council is in a difficult position that would require strong principals and moral strength to actually make a significant change to the course of Somerville's budget.

I have watched this process play out for 5+ years now and have never seen the Council make more than token gestures. Even at the height of the BLM protests this Council did not have the strength of will or morality to do more than make a token cut to the SPD budget. As I have done in years past, as my supposed representatives in this process, DO BETTER.

Don't give the police any more money: no new building for them, no new technology, no pay raises, no new officers. Cut the SPD budget to \$1. Take every penny from those lines and ask the mayor to put them into services that would actually help. This is not a fair negotiation, this is not a process to find compromise. The mayor has made it clear where her priorities stand - and token gestures will not change the course of those priorities. Force the mayor to change those priorities to reflect what myself and many of my fellow Somerville citizens have been demanding for years.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Regards,
Andrew Laobak
40 School Street
Somerville MA 02143
Ward 2

From: lia c.
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 3:55 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Comments on the 2023 Fiscal Year Budget Process

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Lia Cowley and I've lived in Union Square for the past 13 years. I'm writing to express my express displeasure at the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2023 budget. I'm dismayed at the 8.16% increase in the police budget, which is the largest increase in over a decade, particularly when the funding for body cameras comes with no civilian oversight or strong policy. Body cameras have been proven time and time again to be ineffective at stopping police misconduct. That funding should be cut and allocated instead to the OHS' Tenant Organizing Grant, which would support hiring 3 bilingual tenant organizers and help prevent what would be police-enforced displacement.

Secondly, funding should be allocated to accelerate the implementation of a supervised consumption site, not just continue studying it. At least 12 of our neighbors die of opioid overdoses every year and the city should be moving forward with all of its might to prevent this rather than just hemming and hawing about it.

As for funding \$550,000 for a study to evaluate school buildings and create a design plan- this money should be going directly into our crumbling school's budgets, particularly the Winter Hill school, which has one of the highest Black and Hispanic student populations.

The fact that funding for maintaining roads and sidewalks is being decreased really turns my stomach as a disabled person. Many wheelchair users need to resort to using the streets rather than sidewalks due to poor maintenance leading to unmaneuverable bumps and lack of snow removal on side streets. This is incredibly dangerous and how people get killed.

Finally, it's wrong to hire a legislative liaison with a base salary of \$69,000 to help the Mayor field phone calls from city council when our councilors only make about \$41K a year and most need second jobs. Our city councilors deserve a living wage for all the hard work they do!

In closing, we need action, not more studies!

Sincerely,

Lia Cowley
Union Square, Somerville

From: Iris Oxford
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 3:47 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Cc: Mayor; Matthew McLaughlin; Ben Ewen-Campen; strezoatlarge@gmail.com; Willie Burnley, Jr.; Charlotte Kelly; Jake Wilson; JT Scott; Jesse Clingan; Beatriz Gomez-Mouakad; Lance Davis; judyforward7@gmail.com
Subject: Somerville FY23 budget comments

Hi there,

As the city of Somerville plans its FY23 budget, I would like to express my strong opposition to any increase in the police budget whatsoever, and in particular the proposed \$127k for body cameras and the \$71k for an IT specialist to implement them.

The notion that body cameras improve policing or prevent abuses by police has been thoroughly debunked in studies by the National Institute of Justice and others. "A comprehensive review of 70 studies of body-worn cameras use found that the larger body of research on body-worn cameras showed no consistent or no statistically significant effects. This meta-analysis was rated by CrimeSolutions and resulted in a No Effects rating for the impact of body-worn cameras on use of force, assaults on officers, officer-initiated calls for service, arrests, traffic stops and tickets, and field interviews (i.e., stop and frisk)." <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/research-body-worn-cameras-and-law-enforcement>

Nationally, a study of 29 years of police spending across hundreds of cities shows that increased police spending has no clear correlation with addressing violent crime, but does have a very clear correlation with increased misdemeanor arrests. This increased misdemeanor enforcement is concentrated in poor neighborhoods and communities of color, exacerbating existing inequities while not actually reducing crime rates at all. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2022/04/increased-police-spending-leads-to-more-misdemeanor-arrests.html>

The data is clear that increased police spending does not make us safer, it only serves to further traumatize already marginalized communities. Somerville has an opportunity to be a leader in exploring alternatives that are proven to improve community safety: investing in housing stability, addressing the opioid epidemic, education and youth mentoring, social services, food security, etc. This is where our money should be going, and I hope you will follow the data as you plan how to spend our city's resources. With the information available to us, there is no possible justification for an increase in police spending.

Thank you,
Iris Oxford
34 Fremont St Unit 2

From: Taryn Moon
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 1:38 PM
To: Mayor; City Clerk Contact; All City Council
Subject: City Budget Draft

Hello,

My name is Taryn Moon and I live in Ward 4. I am concerned that the budget as proposed does not include specific funding for urgently needed fixes at the Winter Hill Community Innovation School building. Both of my children are enrolled at the school and have come home with stories about falling ceiling tiles, excessive heat, and electrical issues. These are conditions that are unacceptable and unsafe. As you know, building projects take time and the students and staff at the Winter Hill School cannot wait another year for action. Money must be allocated in next year's budget to start the process of either making a plan for comprehensive repairs or developing a long term solution. Budgets reflect organizations' priorities and values and this draft budget reveals an alarming lack of concern and care for the safety and wellbeing of the Winter Hill School community. Please do not vote to approve this budget until it specifically includes funding to address these urgent building needs at Winter Hill. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Taryn Moon

From: Catherine MacLean
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 10:43 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Budget commentary

Dear Clerk, Members of the Council, and Mayor Ballantyne,

I would like to submit comments on the budget proposal for FY23.

First, I want to applaud the increase in the budget for the Somerville Public Schools and the many new positions in direct social services being created, including the Home Visitor in SomerBaby, the Spanish speaking position in SomerViva, Youth Services, and Mental Health directors. The reappropriation of excess GLX funds to housing is also an excellent decision, and I am excited for participatory budgeting to come to Somerville.

However, I also have concerns and reservations about many aspects of this budget. There are several positions being created that do not have clear functions or purposes and I worry may contribute to an over-administration at high cost. In addition, a large portion of the funds for the schools buildings seem to be going to "studying the issue" which is an area where costs can easily inflate such that there's very little money left for the actual remedies to problems. The \$75,000 actually allocated towards "Zero Waste" is woefully inadequate and will not allow the city to advance a compost program or other critical aspects of waste management in the near-term future which we ought to be prioritizing strongly.

I am concerned that given the number of rental units in Somerville that without some accompanying ordinance to more strongly encourage/compel transitioning units to clean energy, many Somerville landlords will not engage with this program leaving renters trapped in high-emitting structure that are also more dangerous because of the presence of natural gas.

Finally, I want to join many of my fellow residents in expressing concern over the increase to the police budget. As we have seen with the experience of many other cities, body cameras typically do two things: 1) "malfunction" or get "accidentally turned off" at very inconvenient times 2) provide evidence of misconduct. Neither of those things gets at the root causes of these problems or meaningfully addresses public safety. I would strongly encourage that more funding be allocated to social services and other avenues be considered for improving public safety.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Catherine MacLean
Somerville Resident, Ward 7

From: Alessandra Seiter
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 8:29 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Cc: Mayor; All City Council; Matthew McLaughlin; Ben Ewen-Campen; strezoatlarge@gmail.com; Willie Burnley, Jr.; Charlotte Kelly; Jake Wilson; JT Scott; Jesse Clingan; Beatriz Gomez-Mouakad; Lance Davis; Judy Pineda Neufeld
Subject: FY23 Budget Comment

To the Honorable Mayor Katjana Ballantyne and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for the time and care you've already taken in crafting the FY23 budget for the City of Somerville. There is a lot to be excited about in the budget, including the creation of new and newly full-time staff positions such as in Health and Human Services. I am also thrilled about the transition to participatory budgeting - I've seen how impactful it's been in Cambridge and am eager to see it in Somerville.

I would, however, like to express some concerns about the budget. Broadly, it seems like a lot of money is going towards studies, analyses, and other administrative costs rather than actual implementations of solutions to issues our neighbors have been urgently facing for years. It also seems like there is dependence upon funds that will only be temporarily available to the City. For example:

- Funding for **housing stability** in the form of rental assistance depends upon ARPA funds that will run out, meaning that the many Somerville renters facing uncontrolled rent increases and displacement - especially with GLX and the impending Davis Square development - will have limited resources once we are not considered to be in the emergency situation of a global pandemic. Pervasive evictions and housing instability *are* emergency situations. I urge the Mayor and City Council to dedicate City funding to concrete policy changes that will allow vulnerable Somervillians to stay in their homes, such as those outlined in the first section of [Councilor Kelly's budget priorities](#).
- Funding for a **supervised consumption site** is going toward site selection and a community engagement process, with no guarantee that it will actually be built - all while at least a dozen neighbors die annually from opioid overdoses.
- Funding for **Somerville Public School buildings** is also going toward an evaluation and design plan rather than concrete improvements, many of which could be made in the near-term without an extensive study.
- Funding for **City Council** is going toward a legislative liaison to facilitate Mayoral communications with City Council, rather than strengthening the Council itself such as by paying Councilors a living wage. Doing so would provide stability to Councilors so they could devote more time and energy to representing constituents, and would open up the possibility of serving as a Councilor to many more Somerville residents.

Meanwhile, the budget proposes to **increase the police budget by 8.16% to \$18.1 million** - the largest percent increase in over a decade, all while the City is undergoing an already delayed study of the SPD. I strongly believe that redirecting additional funds to any and all of the issues above would be money much more well spent than increasing spending on a department with an uncertain future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Alessandra Seiter

Community Engagement Librarian // Harvard Kennedy School

MLIS // Simmons University

BA, Geography // Vassar College

██████ // ██████ // ██████
she/her or they/them

From: Hannah Powers
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 8:23 AM
To: City Clerk Contact
Cc: Mayor; Matthew McLaughlin; Ben Ewen-Campen; strezoatlarge@gmail.com; Willie Burnley, Jr.; Charlotte Kelly; Jake Wilson; JT Scott; Jesse Clingan; Beatriz Gomez-Mouakad; judyforward7@gmail.com; Lance Davis
Subject: 2023 Budget Public Comment

Dear Mayor Ballantyne and City Council,

I was very concerned to see the proposed budget includes a large increase in SPD funding.

As a constituent I must advocate for greater safety in my community. Increasing the police budget would be a move in the wrong direction.

Please take this community's concerns seriously, and change the budget to redirect those resources towards pretty much anything else.

Thank you,
Hannah Powers

From: Jessie Stickgold-Sarah
Sent: Monday, June 6, 2022 7:25 AM
To: City Clerk Contact; Matthew McLaughlin; Willie Burnley, Jr.; Ben Ewen-Campen; strezoatlarge@gmail.com; Charlotte Kelly; Jake Wilson; JT Scott; Jesse Clingan; Beatriz Gomez-Mouakad; Lance Davis; judyforward7@gmail.com
Subject: Concerns about 2023 city budget

Mayor Ballantyne, city councillors,

I'm a long time city resident: I grew up in Somerville, moved away briefly, and have lived in Ward 5 for the last 21 years. I'm writing to express serious concerns about the 2023 budget, **specifically the increase in police budget, and the decision to "plan" for school repairs and the supervised consumption site, rather than making real progress.**

Consumption site: A few weeks ago, walking through Davis Square, I was stunned and saddened to see a covered body in Statue Park. I learned later that this was an overdose death. **Why are we not making real progress towards implementing a supervised consumption site?** We lose a dozen of our neighbors to overdoses every year. I'm not willing to give up on the next dozen--relief needs to be in THIS year's budget.

Winter Hill school: Like you, I recently learned about the truly shocking conditions at this school, which hosts many vulnerable populations. Again, I'm dismayed to see that we're going to spend the year "planning" instead of **taking immediate action to address physical and learning conditions like overwhelming heat, damage to walls and ceilings, and tremendous disrepair.** Our kids can't lose a year!

Police budget: It's honestly hard for me to believe that after the last two years of discussion about the role of police, which shaped the most recent election cycle, we're proposing to add over EIGHT PERCENT to the police budget. **That's an increase of over a million dollars, money that we could spend for IMMEDIATE impact--say, on our schools, or on a supervised consumption site.** As I walked through Davis Square I saw multiple police officers standing around near that body. **What if we could have saved that person instead?**

I hope you'll take a serious look at this budget and make better choices. Thank you for your time.

Jessie Stickgold-Sarah
Ward 5, Warwick Street

From: Jennifer A. Civitella
Sent: Sunday, June 5, 2022 8:53 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Comments regarding FY23 Budget

To the City Council:

Somerville's FY23 budget should put our kids and schools first. In particular, students of need should be a focus including: hiring and training teachers and para-teachers to support ESL and special needs students. In addition, after school enrichment programs should be universal and free for all SPS students and available at every school for every student.. No more waitlists! Lastly, funding should be allocated to learning assessments and remedial tutoring in reading and math for students who fell behind during covid. The schools should be awash with reading and math tutors to get kids back on track. Any excess covid funds available should first go to schools to specifically provide tutors to address the covid learning deficit.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jennifer
9 Bolton Street

Sent by mobile device. Please excuse typos and brevity. Thank you.

From: Alan Bingham
Sent: Sunday, June 5, 2022 3:55 PM
To: City Clerk Contact; All City Council; Mayor
Subject: 2022 Budget

Dear Mayor, City Councilors & City Clerk
RE: Budget comments
June 5, 2022

The city has neglected its responsibility to keep Davis Square safe for pedestrians, despite numerous representations to the former administration and planning staff. DavisNOW.org published an itemized list of infrastructure needs, with digital images, some 5+ years ago, presenting this to the city councilors (previously aldermen) and the mayor. Despite assurances of remedy nothing has been done. This list is still available for review, and action, on the DavisNOW.org website.

That the city has overtly ignored the issues of hazardous crosswalks and sidewalks in the square, despite the issues having been brought to their attention exposes the city to litigation. Buckled sidewalks, holes in the surface, broken kerb cuts, uplifted kerbs and bricks and a hodge podge of temporary bitumen repairs are slip, trip and fall hazards. People with any ambulation disability, people in wheelchairs and even parents with small children in strollers have immense difficulty in negotiating the square and many simply resort to walking on the road instead as it provides a better surface.

Davis Square is an active hub undergoing rapid development and pedestrian access must not be ignored. It is a public safety issue. The general area (in a ¼ mile radius excluding North Cambridge) is the city's 'golden goose' for tax revenue, generating the most significant share of that revenue in the city by any area. Yet the critical infrastructure is being ignored and disregarded.

I am unable to identify in the new budget under discussion the allocation to remedy this serious neglect. So I believe that once again the plan is to ignore this public safety need. I would like to imagine that the city councilors, and the new mayor, will take seriously a remedy as a matter of fiscal priority the Davis Square pedestrian infrastructure repairs.

Please add my comments to the public meeting on the budget for June 6.

Sincerely

Alan Bingham

30 Day St, Somerville.

[REDACTED]

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From: Ulysses Lateiner
Sent: Sunday, June 5, 2022 1:50 PM
To: City Clerk Contact
Subject: public comment re City Council FY23 Budget Hearing 6/6/22

Dear City Councilors,

I am writing to ask that the Council please ensure, as part of your FY23 budget discussions, that funding is allocated for badly needed and long-overdue basic repairs of Davis Square, which the previous administration allowed to decay into a disgraceful and dangerous condition.

If you spend any amount of time in Davis Square, you are presumably familiar with this decay; if you need a refresher, it has been documented in extensive detail at [DavisNow.org](https://davisnow.org). However, I'd like to call the Council's attention in particular to Davis Square's pedestrian infrastructure, e.g. sidewalks, curb ramps, crosswalks, pavers, and curbs, which thanks to the previous administration's neglect has reached a condition so dire that many locations throughout Davis Square are no longer fully accessible to the mobility-impaired, and present an injury risk to fully mobile pedestrians as well.

I hope the Council and the new administration believe that a busy transportation, commercial, and cultural hub of our city deserves to have safe, fit-for-purpose basic pedestrian infrastructure, and that the relatively small amount of money it would cost to repair the existing Davis Square pedestrian infrastructure would be money well spent. Assuming that's the case, please make sure that the FY23 budget includes and specifies the funds needed to make this happen.

thanks,
Ulysses Lateiner
15 Chandler Street

From: Radha Natarajan
Sent: Thursday, June 2, 2022 11:05 AM
To: Mayor; City Clerk Contact; All City Council
Subject: Somerville's Police Budget

Dear Mayor Ballantyne and City Councilors,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to any increase in the Somerville Police Department's budget as well as voice my support for a reduction in Somerville's police budget.

As background, I have been a homeowner in Somerville since 2007 after having lived in Somerville on and off from 2003-07. I have a young child in the Somerville public school system, and we intend to remain here. I have been a victim of crime. Our family is committed to our community and ensuring that it is safe for our family and others. In addition, I have had a "front-row seat" into the criminal legal system in Massachusetts since 2003. I was a public defender, including in Somerville, from 2003-2015, and I am now the Executive Director of the New England Innocence Project. I have seen the tremendous harm that the criminal legal system has inflicted on communities, including ours.

Policing is not synonymous with public safety. Far from it. Police do not prevent crimes: Access to housing, education, employment, food, and health/mental health care do. Evidence demonstrates that meeting people's needs -- caring for our community -- is a far more effective deterrent than criminal laws or policing. In addition, police departments disproportionately target people of color and persons with disabilities and remain largely unaccountable for physical and emotional harm they create. There are many scholars/researchers (like Alex Vitale) who have published studies about the ineffectiveness of policing -- as well as police training -- on measures of safety. Somerville's budget should be informed by **data and evidence**, not longstanding myths about public safety.

To increase safety and accountability in Somerville, we should support a reallocation of funds, away from the police department and to meet the needs of our community members. We should listen to people most impacted and not ignore the countless examples of police failures, and police brutality, we have witnessed together.

With all of the data we have, including the names we collectively say, it would be a tremendous mistake to increase funding to the police department.

Thank you for taking my views into account as you consider this year's budget discussions. Budgets are moral documents, and more money for policing is immoral.

Radha Natarajan
23 Knapp Street, Unit 2