



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:00pm and adjourned at 10:14pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Burnley, Clingan, Scott, and Wilson), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Councilor Scott joined the meeting at 6:14pm.

The committee went into recess at 8:17pm and returned to regular session at 8:24pm with a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Clingan, Scott, and Wilson), 0 opposed and 1 absent (Councilor Burnley). Councilor Burnley joined the meeting at 8:27pm.

Others present: Dave Goodridge - Director of Information Technology, Neha Singh - Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Ed Bean - Director of Finance, Michael Mastrobuoni - Budget Director, Emily Wisdom - Finance Manager for Police, Michael Richards - Director of Finance for DPW Infrastructure and Asset Management, Lammis Vargas - Chief Administrator Officer, Shumeane Benford - Chief of Police, Kellie Hebert - Director of Finance and Administration DPW Water, Nick Salerno - Elections Commissioner, Jay Piques - Assistant City Solicitor, Cindy Amara - City Solicitor, Anne Gill - Director of Human Resources, Ellen Schneider Collins - Deputy Director of Human Resources, Cathy Lester Salchert - Special Counsel, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

Roll Call

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

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| 1. Committee Minutes (ID # 25-0373) | Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of February 25, 2025. |
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RESULT:	<u>ACCEPTED</u>
AYE:	City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah

Appropriations

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| 2. Mayor's Request (ID # 25-0274) | Requesting the appropriation of \$137,288 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Information Technology (IT) Department Professional & Technical Account for an independent assessment of security and network infrastructure and an organizational review of all IT groups within the city. |
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Director Goodridge shared the assessment will include an advanced security, network, and organizational assessment to address any inefficiencies within these groups. These assessments result in guidelines and recommendations for a technology plan. As technology support continues to be added Director Goodridge highlighted an independent review is helpful in ensuring goals and objectives are being met. In response to Chair Wilson Director Goodridge shared a network assessment was last done maybe in 2013, but did not include security and organizational assessment review.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

Bonding

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0279](#)) Requesting authorization to borrow \$7,600,000 in a bond, and to appropriate the same amount for the FY 2025 Water Main Rehabilitation program as part of the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority's Local Water System Assistance Program.

Director Richards shared this is an annual reoccurring bond request. This FY25 request will supplement the FY24 request as the department is addressing a much longer construction project.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

Grant and Gift Acceptances

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0299](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$100,000 grant with no new match required, from the City of Boston Office of Emergency Management to the Elections Department for security of elections vault.

Chairman Salerno stated the specific use for this request is for the widening and replacement of the doorway to the Elections vault door in the lower level of City Hall.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

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5. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0281](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$335,635 grant with no new match required, from the Department of Mental Health to the Police Department for the Crisis Intervention Training and Technical Assistance Center.
- Finance Manager Wisdom stated this is a renewed grant for a community outreach and recovery program filling three full time staff positions, police officer backfills for crisis management training, and equipment and supplies. Councilor Burnley inquired about the participation levels for the training, Ms. Wisdom does not have specific numbers but expressed there is internal and external training offered through staff and hired contractors. Chair Wilson asked how grant funding and payment are remedied for outside officers who attend training, Chief Benford shared other participants outside the city are not charged because through the grant the city is acting as the regional hub to offer training.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah
6. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0282](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$15,000 grant with no new match required, as a sub-award through the Fenway Community Health Center to the Police Department for the Post-Overdose Support Team (POST).
- Manager Wisdom explained this is another renewed grant to provide follow up related to overdose and opioid related causes.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah
7. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0283](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$23,105 grant that requires a match, from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council to the Police Department for the Metro Mayors Community Safety Initiative.
- Manager Wisdom highlighted this requires a \$5,777 match for hot spot patrol, partnership with Teen Empowerment, and conducting workshops. Councilor Burnley asked how services are broken down. Manger Wisdom stated there are not specific breakdowns in the grant but discussions between Teen Empowerment and Officers assigned are already occurring and they are working together to plan out how to spend the available funds throughout the year and can gather data from previous years later. There was continued discussion around continuing the tradition of basketball tournament. It was shared that discussions are happening on how to best spend funds this year while also trying to deem if the Teen Empowerment
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space is a viable location to hold events.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Mbah

NAY: Ward Two City Councilor Scott and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0284](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend an \$87,450 grant with no new match required, from the Executive Office of Public Safety & Security to the Police Department for staffing.

Manager Wisdom shared this is a non-competitive grant providing funding for municipalities that have been deemed in need of additional police staffing to respond to community needs. This grant is not related to overtime, but a calculation done by the state related to revenue and there are about ten municipalities in the area that are receiving similar funding.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

Prior Year Invoices

9. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0333](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$93.61 using available funds in the Police Department Out-of-State Travel account for food expenses during an investigation.

Manager Wisdom shared this is to reimburse an officer that traveled to Colorado, and this is to rectify the missed invoice.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

10. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0268](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$32.06 to Market Basket/Demoulas using available funds in the Parks & Recreation Food Supplies & Refreshments and Office Supplies accounts.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

Personnel Requests

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11. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0258](#)) Requesting the use of available funds in the Water Enterprise Fund Wages account in the amount of \$14,798.95 to fund a Utility Billing Manager position.
- Director Hebert explained that the request for these positions close to the budget is due to the urgent need in the Water and Sewer Enterprise funds, particularly for intake services and billing. Waiting until the budget cycle could delay filling these positions until September. Director Gill and Chief Administrative Officer Vargas emphasized the importance of these billing roles to support customer service and daily operations.
- The discussion clarified that two of the positions (Utility Billing Manager and Services Operations Manager) are new non-union roles, while the Billing Analyst position is a reclassified non-union role with added responsibilities and compensation. Councilor Scott raised concerns about creating new positions before hiring a Water Director and questioned why these positions were not included in the multi-year compensation study. Director Gill explained that recent urgency prompted departments to address these concerns now, despite the ongoing nature of the requests.
- Councilor Scott also questioned how a reorganization could be successful without a Water Director and asked about the number of union positions filled in Water and Sewer (9 positions). Chair Wilson inquired whether the Billing Analyst position was meant to address existing workload imbalances, which Director Hebert confirmed, noting the position was recommended by an outside analysis.
- Councilor Clingan opposed approving these positions, suggesting contracting services temporarily until the budget cycle. He also pointed out that the Council does not determine worker compensation or appreciation for these positions. Deputy Director Schneider Collins clarified that while all contract positions are vacant on the water side, positions on the sewer side are filled.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE NOT APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah
12. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0260](#)) Requesting the use of available funds in the Water Enterprise Fund Wages account in the amount of \$13,928.44 to fund a new Service Operations Manager position.
- This item was discussed with the agenda item #25-0258.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE NOT APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan, City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr. and City Councilor At Large Mbah
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13. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0262](#)) Requesting the use of available funds in the Water Enterprise Fund Wages account in the amount of \$1,569.10 to fund a Billing Analyst position.

This item was discussed with the agenda item #25-0258.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE NOT APPROVED**

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

Contracts and Easements

14. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0349](#)) Requesting approval of easements from JMC/STM/TGCI Union Square, LLC for 346 Somerville Avenue.

Counsel Salchert shared this is for public access to a park, to be maintained by the property owner, and access to the tank the city is required to maintain and return the park to its prior condition following any work needed to be done.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

15. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0334](#)) Requesting approval of a contract extension for two years until 2/28/2026 for TSA Consulting Group, Inc., for the administration of 457(b) plans.

Director Gill stated that this is a third-party administrator to manage the 457(b) enrollments and departures and provides value to the city.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

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

Ordinances

16. Ordinance (ID # [25-0375](#)) By Councilor Ewen-Campen
Amending the Code of Ordinances by adding Section 2-325 to Chapter 2, Article VI, Division 3 related to compensation for elected officials.

This item was discussed with item #25-0369.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

17. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0370](#)) Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Sections 2-322 and 2-323 of the Code of Ordinances, to update categories and associated salaries for non-union positions.

Director Gill stated the department is requesting to move forward with the compensation study as proposed in the January 31st meeting.

Councilor Burnley raised concerns about the compensation study, specifically about offering higher salaries to attract employees but potentially limiting their long-term earnings due to the step structure. Director Gill explained that compensation studies are dynamic and should be reassessed periodically to align with market trends. He emphasized that the goal is not only to recruit but also to retain employees, offering them opportunities to grow within the city. Deputy Director Schneider Collins added that there is a 40% salary range within each pay band, with more money going to employees who earn less.

Councilor Burnley also asked whether feedback had been gathered from departments regarding the salary bands. Director Gill confirmed that all department heads were involved in shaping the plan, with decisions based on their input and a focus on equity. The discussion then shifted to the housing staff and how their position titles were determined. Deputy Director Schneider Collins clarified that the position titles in the payroll, ordinance, and budget are now aligned through collaboration, which has not been the case previously.

Councilor Mbah and Director Gill had detailed discussions about the process and the input received from department heads during the compensation study.

Councilors Scott and Clingan moved to keep the item in committee for two more weeks to gather additional information. Councilor Wilson asked about the impact of delaying the item on retroactive pay. Director Mastrobuoni explained that the appropriations already submitted for the upcoming Council meeting cover retroactive pay through the end of the fiscal year. Director Gill warned that further delays could harm employee equity and hinder recruitment and retention efforts.

Finally, Director Gill suggested that any further questions be submitted in advance of the next meeting to ensure they could be addressed. Councilor Mbah requested feedback from department heads before moving forward with the study.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Communications and Discussions

18. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [25-0369](#))

Conveying an update on the next steps for recommendations on compensation for Elected Officials.

Director Gill shared that the Municipal Compensation Advisory Board (MCAB) is planning to meet to discuss the topic of automated future increases for council salaries. Chair Wilson introduced agenda item 16, ID # 25 0375, which aims to set these automated increases. However, the goal is not to finalize the ongoing discussions but to gather input from current councilors on the number of hours worked.

Councilor Wilson updated the group on the discussions regarding the proposed ordinance, noting that the effective date of January next year was set to address conflict of interest concerns. The intention is to avoid councilors indirectly setting their own salaries. Attorney Piques clarified that, according to the charter, if a council member or their immediate family has a financial interest in a vote, it may violate the law, which is why the enactment date is set for January.

City Solicitor Amara expressed concern that the ordinance, as currently drafted, is not ready. The meeting's purpose is to work with the councilors to refine the request and collaborate on drafting the appropriate language.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

19. Mayor's
Communication
(ID # [25-0368](#))

Conveying a forthcoming appropriation request from the Salary Contingency account to various city departments to fund an update to the non-union salary ordinance.

This item was discussed with ID #25-0369.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

20. Officer's
Communication
(ID # [25-0371](#))

Finance Director conveying FY 2025 Mid-Year Financial Report in accordance with Section 2-48 of the Code of Ordinances.

Director Bean presented on the Mid-Year Financial Report, attached item entitled *Finance - 2025-03-11 FY 2025 Mid-Year Financial Report (with item 25-0371)*.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Orders and Resolutions

21. Order
(ID # [25-0251](#))
- By Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the Director of Racial and Social Justice provide an update on the citywide disparity study, including when the report will be made available to the public.
- Director Singh provided a brief update that the consultants have shared a rough draft with staff and are in the process of receiving feedback and look forward to sharing the report with the full Council in the coming weeks.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2025-03-11 Memo Parks and Rec PYI (with 25-0268)
- Finance - 2025-03-11 NU Appropriation Memo March 2025 (with 25-0368)
- Finance - 2025-03-11 FinCom Memo - Human Resources (with 25-0370)
- Finance - 2025-03-11 Work Better Task Force Report 09-29-2022 (with 25-0370)
- Finance - 2025-03-11 Proposed Characteristic Chart for Non Union Classification Plan 2025 (with 25-0370)
- Finance - 2025-03-11 Water & Sewer-NU10-Billing Analyst (with 25-0262)
- Finance - 2025-03-11 Water and Sewer-NU07-Utility Billing Manager (with 25-0258)
- Finance - 2025-03-11 Water and Sewer-NU08-Service Operations Manager (with 25-0260)
- Finance - 2025-03-11 FY25 Mid-Year Presentation (with 25-0371)