



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 21, 2022
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jake Wilson	Chair	Remote	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Vice Chair	Remote	
Beatriz GomezMouakad	Ward Five City Councilor	Remote	
Judy PinedaNeufeld	Ward Seven City Councilor	Remote	
Charlotte Kelly	City Councilor At Large	Remote	

Others present: Jill Lathan-Parks & Recreation, Cathy Piantigini-Library, Ted Louis-Jacques-Veterans, Ben Waldrip-Parks & Recreation, Hannah Carrillo-Mayor's Office, Karin Carroll-Human and Health Services, Michael Mastrobuoni-Finance, Ashley Speliotis-Council on Aging, Christopher Hosman-SomerPromise, Barbara Brown-Human Resources, and Renee Mello-Human Resources

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairperson Wilson and adjourned at 9:50 pm.

Review of the FY-2023 Budget

- **Health and Human Services**

Karin Carroll, Director

Additional resources: deputy director for public health, health communications officer, new position mental health services manager, and youth services director. Additional from part-time to full time LGBTQ liaison position.

There is a 13% increase in Ordinary Maintenance for training, supplies and consultant costs along with in-person activities.

Councilor Kelly asked follow up questions about plans for hiring. Director Carroll will work in conjunction with Human Resources in strategies in recruitment. She will set goals and structure in the department to help recruit and retain staff. Councilor Kelly also asked about the \$500,000 stabilization fund, if it will be used for the supervised safe consumption site.

Director Carroll will follow up with the committee with an answer. There is also \$35,000 lump sum payout for people leaving department and if this is normal. Director Mastrobuoni stated if the dept has a salary lag then it would be used for salary buyout. He also stated the \$35,000 was for multiple buyouts which is for paying out accrued vacation.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about the difference with the drop down in budget comparing FY21 to FY23. FY21 was near \$4M and FY23 is now \$2M or more. The school nurses were moved to the school department to help manage the relationships.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked about strategies in hiring multi-lingual social workers. Councilor Scott asked about the grade level for the LGBTQ liaison position that is going full time this year.

Chair Wilson asked about \$22,800 line in Professional & Technical line for SNAP match. Union Square Main Street is fund raising for a match. Director Carroll will get back to the committee regarding a SNAP match.

Councilor Scott made a motion requesting that the salary grade for the social worker and LGBTQ be adjusted upward to match the hirer positions. This was laid on the table.

- **Council on Aging**

Director Ashley Speliotis

The budget is mostly level funding and only asking for \$1,000 increase to produce a 2nd newsletter.

Councilor Scott asked about vacant community positions on the Council on Aging board and the city council approving seven appointees.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about two prior resolutions for funding for needs assessment of the seniors and increase in technology like laptops. Director Speliolis received ARPA funding for such requests to create, teach and create a lending program for seniors.

Councilor Kelly asked about Professional & Technical breakdown and how many grants spend on certain programs. The program to teach resiliency and ageless grace, bilingual program, arts council grants will reach out to the council on aging and will be granted funding based on review.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked about the taxi program and how it is funded. Director Speliotis stated this was created through the state during the pandemic. There are two grant periods and it was approved through ARPA with secured funding through March 2023.

- **SomerPromise**

Christopher Hosman, Director

Up 27% from FY22 for Baby Home Visits

Ordinary Maintenance up 54% due to increase materials needed for Baby Home visits.

Councilor Scott asked about home visit completed this year compared to last year. Decrease in home visits 139 visits for past fiscal year. Over 750 referrals from Baby home visits.

There is only one vacancy in this department that has been vacant for the entire year. The SomerPromise coordinator position was vacant for period of time, but is currently filled.

Councilor Scott asked about the Professional & Technical line that is only half spent.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked about the home care program providing more education and resources.

- **Veterans Services**

Ted Louis-Jacques, Director

Top priority to research affordable housing development for veterans.

Many plans were affected by COVID last year and looking to have events for the community to come out of isolation this year.

Councilor Scott asked about Chapter 115 payouts dropping off and asked how many veterans are in Chapter 115. Director Louis-Jacques stated there are 15 veterans which is extremely low. He also stated that neighboring communities are similar in numbers for veterans

qualifying for Chapter 115. Chapter 115 benefits are stated as: MGL states that each community should have a VSO. The Chapter also stated this is to assist with getting veterans qualified for services such as jobs, housing, mental health, stipends, Medicare/Medicaid which is state funded for low income veterans. Councilor Scott asked how many veterans moved out of Somerville. Director Louis-Jacques will provide this information to the committee.

- **Libraries**

Cathy Piantigini, Director

\$100,000 for wage increase for part-time staff

\$50,000 to hire a new librarian for West Branch Library

\$30,000 for e-books and other needs

\$7,000 for Professional & Technical for library programs

Councilor Kelly asked about the Friends of Library Group and how much is spent on honorarium. The Friends Group is the primary fund raiser for the library. Councilor Kelly would like to know the total amount spent by the Friends Group.

Councilor Scott asked when the Central Library and East Library will be renovated.

Director Piantigini stated she does not have a timeline for it and would like to encourage more conversation about this matter. Councilor Scott also asked about accessibility for people with mobility issues. There is handicap parking on Highland Avenue and one spot adjacent to the library.

Chair Wilson asked about store front branch library status and location. Director Piantigini stated she was planning a temporary library in Assembly Square. She came up with a budget and are engaged in discussion to see what they can do in Assembly Square. She also mentioned Winter Hill as a future location and perhaps something in Ward 2.

- **Health and Life Insurance + Medicare**

Barbara Brown, Benefits Manager

8% increase health insurance rates

Life insurance is stable with a little less than 2% increase

- **Workers' Compensation**

Renee Mello, Manager

- **Parks and Recreation**

Jill Lathan, Director (now DPW Commissioner)

A new director starting July 25th.

Not much change in this year's budget

Councilor Kelly asked about dual roles in Parks & Recreation and DPW. What is time line for new field maintenance position. Director Lathan is still advertising for this position and it has been very difficult to fill in the past. Councilor Kelly asked about life guard wages which were increased to \$25 per hour for the summer wage. DCR is going up to \$21 per hour.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked about documents not being translated for a multi-lingual community and will discuss with the new director. Director Lathan stated they need to procure the translation services in the future.

Councilor Scott asked about the SomerParks program to make sure registration was up for the parks page and how much it will cost for translations. Director Lathan will be meeting with the new director to start developing the scope to get out as soon as the director starts. The service will go out to bid.

Councilor Scott motioned that the Mayor's office allocates \$20,000 to Professional & Technical for Parks & Recreation for the emergent need for translations. This motion was laid on the table. Chair Wilson would be open to a mid-appropriation, if money is needed. **Councilor Scott changed the motion to \$25,000 to Professional & Technical translations needs.** This was laid on the table.

- **Fields Maintenance**

Jill Lathan, Director

Ben Waldrip, Superintendent

Councilor Scott is concerned about the vacancies and how long they have been open. They are still advertising for the operations director position. Councilor Scott asked if there is still a need to be a separate department. Superintendent Waldrip stated there is a lot of overlap in the two departments.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad suggested that the school building superintendent be dedicated to that position.

Chair Wilson asked about the overall renovation project at Nunziato. The irrigation update would be part of larger scale to include Hodgkins also on line. Chair Wilson asked about the \$10,000 of synthetic field maintenance. Superintendent Waldrip stated the maintenance is being performed internally and have purchased the equipment needed for this service.

Councilor Scott asked about Director Mastrobuoni about vacancies which he will have an updated vacancy report posted tomorrow morning.

- **Kennedy Pool Enterprise**

Jill Lathan, DPW Commissioner

No major changes with pool, just making sure life guard wages are competitive.

Swim lessons have started back. Want to do more senior programs this year.

Councilor Scott asked about the fees and subsidizing with general funds. Why was pool separating out for enterprise fund? Commissioner Lathan talked about the cost and taking over from school department to make sure pool is appropriately being a maintained facility.

Councilor Gomez Mouakad asked about the maintenance and is it a joint responsibility under Parks & Recreation working with the buildings department.

Chair Wilson asked about the impact on the revenue and expense. Commissioner Lathan stated because of the pandemic, they were not able to do swim lessons which is a huge part of the revenue.

- **Dilboy Enterprise**

Jill Lathan, Commissioner

Dilboy has been renovated with a new surface.

Chair Wilson questioned the impact of the new fields and if the stadium revenue will increase.

Councilor Scott asked about the facility that is owned by DCR with a 10-year agreement with the city. Commissioner Lathan stated the facility is for regional use and not a solely

Somerville facility. Commissioner Lathan stated \$23,000 was transferred to reduce the rate for the youth leagues.

- **Rinks Enterprise**

Jill Lathan, DPW Commissioner

Two rinks in Somerville. DCR awarded the contract to FMC Ice Sports for the next several years for the DCR Veterans rink. The city chose FMC Ice Sports to oversee the Founders Memorial Rink in which the contract will run out this year.

Councilor Scott asked about the fees the city is collecting. The youth get a lower rate from Founders, as specified by the City of Somerville. Commissioner Lathan stated that Founders is too small for public skating use. The electricity budget was reduced because the city is only paying for the Founders Rink, not Veterans rink. Councilor Scott asked about the electric Zamboni and the city is not using the propane Zamboni which is in storage.

Chair Wilson asked about the \$372,000 for the rink and how much is contingency is on the city resuming in house operations. Commissioner Lathan stated that \$131,000 has been put in the budget as contingency plan. Commissioner Lathan will know over the few months the outcome of the rinks.