



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 3, 2022

6:00 PM

Others present: Kate Hartke – Director of Grants and External Funds, Erica Satin-Hernandez – APRA Advisory Committee, Morgan Simko – ARPA Advisory Committee, Suzanne Rinfret – Director of Parking, Christian Brandt – MAPC, Aneesh Sahni – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 7:42 PM on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Kelly, Pineda Neufeld, McLaughlin, Scott and Wilson), none against and none absent.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Jake Wilson, Vice Chair Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Matthew McLaughlin, Judy Pineda Neufeld and Charlotte Kelly

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [22-1626](#)) Approval of the Finance Committee Minutes of September 20, 2022.

RESULT: APPROVED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

2. Committee Minutes (ID # [22-1785](#)) Approval of the Finance Committee Minutes of October 20, 2022.

RESULT: APPROVED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Prior Year Invoices

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-1629](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$13,770.21 using available funds in the Parking Department's Credit Card Convenience Account for May 2022 credit card fees.

Discussed with item 22-1669
Director Rinfret explained that funds were available to pay the invoices, however, the purchase order was closed prematurely.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 4. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-1669](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$5,418.98 using available funds in the Parking Department Professional Services Account for Ticket/Permit Processing Vendor, Conduent State & Local Solutions.

Discussed with item 22-1629
 Director Rinfret explained that funds were available to pay the invoices, however, the purchase order was closed prematurely.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Grant Acceptances

- 5. Mayor's Request (ID # [22-1823](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$38,752,085.12 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 grant from the United States Treasury.

Ms. Satin-Hernandez, Director Hartke and Councilor Pineda Neufeld spoke on this item and told the committee that the ARPA Advisory Committee met for 5 weeks with a goal of establishing the city's Values and Funding Priorities statement, to guide the city in allocating the remaining ARPA funds. They gave a brief presentation that highlighted community values, funding priorities and funding tranches. To date, \$35.2 million has been expended or committed and there is \$42.3 million remaining to be allocated. The presentation is attached and additional information is available at: www.somervillema.gov/arpa <<http://www.somervillema.gov/arpa>>.

Councilor McLaughlin spoke about an immediate need to address homelessness and would like some of the funds put aside for that purpose. Ms. Satin-Hernandez said the committee is working with the homeless coalition to connect people with the services they need, but that the funds will not be used to provide housing directly.

Councilor Scott asked if there's a role and vision going forward to check on the progress of the allocation plan and Director Hartke said that there was not, at this time. Councilor Scott asked who selects the projects and Ms. Satin-Hernandez explained the process involved in making the selections. Councilor Scott commented that, ultimately, (based on treasury regulations), it's up to the mayor to decide how the funds are allocated. Councilor Scott asked how much of the fund allocation would be for the creation of new housing and Ms. Satin-Hernandez replied that said none of the funds would be directly used to create new housing but wrap around services would be provided.

The committee discussed infrastructure funding and Ms. Satin-Hernandez

said that the playgrounds for the West Somerville Neighborhood and Brown Schools were included in the infrastructure. Councilor Scott commented that the city could get to the end of the \$80 million and have none left for infrastructure and Director Sahni assured him that the administration would make sure that doesn't happen. Councilor Scott spoke about a fire that displaced several people in ward 2 last Friday and the efforts being made to find them housing. He related that he was told by the city that there was no money available to pay for hotel rooms to house those who were displaced by the fire. Director Hartke said that the Department of Housing Stability is working on a plan to deal with situations of this kind.

Ms. Satin-Hernandez said the city is trying to invite opportunities for municipal representatives and staffers, as well as non-profits, to apply for aid, e.g., heating cost assistance.

Councilor Kelly asked that the value and priorities statement be read into the record and she noted that the ruling doesn't explicitly say that the chief executive has the final say on distribution of ARPA funds. Director Hartke will provide the section reference to clarify this. Councilor Kelly asked for the timelines and information, i.e., open, closed open-ended, of each project and Director Hartke replied that there are various internal timelines but they're not included on the webpage. Councilor Kelly note some sizable projects and questioned several of the allocations and Director Hartke provided explanations for each of them. Administrative staff will remain until 2026 in order to close out the ARPA projects and the cost for that will come from ARPA funds. ARPA funds may be used for school projects and Director Sahni stated that the administration agrees that the Winter Hill School issues need to be addressed. Councilor Kelly asked that regular, perhaps quarterly, ARPA updates be provided to the City Council. Councilor Wilson commented that he's curious to see city's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) when it comes out and Director Hartke noted that the CIP would influence the ARPA allocations.

Councilor Scott questioned funding to close the wage gap, to conduct a Public Safety disparity study and to provide universal basic income. Ms. Satin-Hernandez explained that funds will be used to for a range of projects aimed at closing the wage gap, e.g., hiring locally and providing job training. Plans for a pilot program to provide universal basic income directly to recipients are being worked out. With respect to the disparity study, details will be provided for this commitment for which funds are being set aside.

Councilor McLaughlin made a motion to approve the item. Councilor Scott noted that the mayor believes she is the final authority on this matter and that the City Council has no say in it, but if it comes down to accepting the funds, he'll vote yes. Councilor McLaughlin said everyone has priorities and would like more input, but he'll vote for it. Councilor Pineda Neufeld disagreed that the mayor thinks that she is the final authority since she created the ARPA Advisory Committee, adding that she (Councilor Pineda

Neufeld) was a member of the Advisory Committee and represented the City Council’s views with respect to the ARPA funds. She continued by saying that if each allocation has to come before the City Council, it will slow the process down. Chair Wilson commented that he feels better about this tranche than the first one and Councilor Kelly commented that advising and decision-making feel very different to her and she is struggling with this because of the lack of decision-making authority with it.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward One City Councilor McLaughlin, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Kelly

Unfinished Business

- 6. Order (ID # [22-0073](#))

By Councilor Scott, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Davis
That the administration assign staff to support the Wage Theft Advisory Committee.

Chair Wilson conveyed that he spoke to Councilor Gomez Mouakad about this item, who said that the biggest challenge is getting new members on the committee so that it can reach a quorum. She would like this item to be marked “work complete” and she will submit a plan at a later date.. Councilor Scott said the Wage Theft Advisory Committee (WTAC) has yet to have any staff but does have a liaison, adding that this isn’t a case of having appointments waiting for approval. Director Sahni explained that there is one mayoral appointee and that the remainder of seats are not mayoral appointments. Chair Wilson said that he believes that the WTAC is the only board/commission to not have a city employee as the body’s staff liaison and noted that the rest of the appointments will come from the City Council. Director Sahni commented that there is no specific city staff assigned to this committee, to which Councilor Scott said, “we asked for staff and the answer was no”.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**