



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Finance Committee

### Meeting Minutes

**Tuesday, March 25, 2025**

**6:00 PM**

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:00pm and adjourned at 7:37pm on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Burnley, Clingan, Scott, Wilson), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Others present: Ashley Speliotis - Director of Council on Aging, Emily Wisdom - Director of Police Finance, Shumeane Benford - Police Chief, Alan Inacio - Planning Board Senior Accountant, Jill Lathan - DPW Commissioner, Kimberley Hutter - Legislative Liaison, Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

#### **Roll Call**

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

1. Committee Minutes  
(ID # [25-0491](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of March 11, 2025.

**RESULT:** **ACCEPTED**

**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

#### Transfers

2. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [25-0434](#))

Requesting approval of a transfer of \$35,000 from the Health and Human Services Professional and Technical Services Account to the Council on Aging Transportation (Non-School) Account for the Senior Taxi Transportation program.

Director Speliotis shared additional context that the program was initially allocated \$10,000/month and has been routinely operating on \$13,000-\$15,000 and this request will continue to fund the program through the end of the fiscal year.

**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

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0410](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$42,000 grant with no new match required from the Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department for safety equipment.
- Director Wisdom requested the purchase of high-visibility gear to ensure officers can perform their duties safely and efficiently. Councilor Burnley inquired about the last purchase and the current condition of the gear. Director Wisdom explained that some items are at the end of their lifespan, while others are meant to equip additional officers. When asked about gas masks, Chief Benford clarified that they are intended for use when replacing canister deployments. Officers under 3 years of service lack the necessary equipment, and ensuring safety and readiness in potential situations is a priority. Councilor Scott and Councilor Clingan referenced tear gas in the ordinance, and Director Wisdom clarified that the request pertains to gas mask filters, with further investigation into available gas canisters.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Mbah
- NAY:** City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

#### Contracts and Easements

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0285](#)) Requesting approval of a time-only extension for an additional two years until 12/31/2026 for the contract with Warner Larson Landscape Architects, to complete additional structural and design services at the Healey Schoolyard and Athletic Field.
- Director Inacio was present to speak on the contract extension and clarified there is additional structural wall repair 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

#### Prior Year Invoices

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0168](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$72.24 using available funds in the Department of Racial and Social Justice Rental Water Cooler Account for the purchase of four cases of bottled water.
- 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 # [25-0400](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$3,090 using available funds in the Parks & Recreation Department DCR-Boat House account.

**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

Appropriations

7. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0456](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$160,000 from the Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Department of Public Works Repairs to Buildings Account for fabrication and installation of courts at Founders Rink.

Commissioner Lathan presented a request for new flooring, explaining that the current polished concrete is unsuitable for the diverse programming and activities intended at the facility. The slick surface of the concrete is not ideal for multi-use, recreational, and sporting programs. This request arises from the increasing number of programming demands placed in the Parks and Recreation Department. Prior to submitting the request, extensive research was conducted on various types of flooring, and the proposal is to install wood parquet flooring that will protect the concrete beneath it, with an added subfloor.

Chair Wilson asked whether ice could still be laid during colder months and whether the new flooring would be removable. Commissioner Lathan clarified that the flooring would remain in place until the City and administration decided to revert the space back to an ice rink. While the flooring is not permanent and won't prevent future ice rink use, the building and its current flooring were not designed for multi-purpose use. Installing the new flooring will make the space more functional for a broader range of activities from March to December. Parks and Recreation utilized the rink until December 5, 2024. During the discussion, it was noted that various flooring options were explored, considering factors such as storage, durability, flexibility, quality, and the capacity for hosting a wide range of activities. A comparison was made to TD Garden, which has the infrastructure to easily transition between ice and wood flooring, supported by professional staff and proper storage, unlike the Founder's Rink.

Chair Wilson raised concerns about whether ice could still be laid down in the future and whether the flooring would withstand freezing temperatures in the colder months. Commissioner Lathan reassured the committee that this type of flooring would not interfere with future ice installation should the administration decide to use the facility as an ice rink in the future.

Councilor Mbah later inquired about the cost of the flooring. Commissioner Lathan provided preliminary cost estimates, including \$59,000 for materials, \$22,000 for the subflooring, and \$16,000 for installation, in addition to costs for lining the rink.

Councilor Scott asked about the durability of the flooring. Commissioner

Lathan elaborated on the logistics of rolling up the flooring for a three-month period and the practicality of ensuring the concrete underneath remains secure. This would involve hiring a company and securing a storage facility for the flooring, which covers approximately 9,000 square feet, and reinstalling it later. As discussed, it takes about two weeks to build the ice, and similarly, the process of melting and cleaning the ice shortens the available time for skating to just a month and a half or two. Councilor Clingan asked about the cost of laying down the ice. Commissioner Lathan shared her experience from her previous role in Parks and Recreation, noting that in the past, the cost of operating the compressors was around \$8,000, which was outsourced. Currently, costs would be reinvested into purchasing equipment such as Zambonis, along with staffing, contracting, and permitting expenses. Chair Wilson clarified that it would not cost the City extra money to lay down the ice, but these elements would play a role in future decisions regarding the rink.

The conversation continued regarding the potential use of the Founders Rink. Commissioner Lathan emphasized that the purchase of this flooring would allow the space to accommodate additional programming until the administration decides to repurpose the building for more extensive recreational use. Chair Wilson, in response, advocated for the youth hockey and curling groups, who would lose access to the rink if the new flooring were installed.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

**AYE:** Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Mbah

**NAY:** City Councilor At Large Wilson and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

8. Mayor's Request  
(ID # [25-0470](#))

Requesting the appropriation of \$922,609 from the Salary Contingency account to various departmental Salaries Accounts to fund an update to the non-union salary ordinance.

**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

9. 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.

**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. 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.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Orders and Resolutions

11. Order  
(ID # [25-0252](#)) By Councilor Burnley Jr.  
That the City Auditor provide in writing to this Council, the revenue generated by the short-term rental tax and an estimate of how much additional revenue would be generated if a 3% community impact fee was adopted.

There were memos, which can be viewed in referenced documents, submitted in response to this agenda item and agenda item 12 ID # 25-0255. Councilor Burnley directed a question directed at Intergovernmental Affairs (IGA) if the city could continue the practice of requesting the Department of Revenue the impact fee and set aside a 3% community fee to continue to support arts in the city and is there any sense in the administration if they are interested in adopting the community impact fee. Liaison Hutter responded that the request could be made but an ask about breaking off funds would have to go to the Finance Director, additionally there is an item in front of the Council, ID # 25-0483, that is in Legislative Matters already to opt into this type of fee.

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

12. Order  
(ID # [25-0255](#)) By Councilor Burnley Jr.  
That the City Solicitor provide an assessment of whether a trust could be created for funds from a short-term rental program, half of which would be allocated for grants to local artists for beautification projects, as proposed by the Creative Displacement Task Force.

This item was taken up with ID # 25-0255.

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

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2025-03-25 PYI Memo Park Rec (with 25-0400)
- Finance - 2025-03-25 Response regarding short term rentals (with 25-0252)
- Finance - 2025-03-25 Law Memo re short term rental fees (with 25-0255)