



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 26, 2023

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:00 p.m. and adjourned at 7:36 p.m. on a Roll Call Vote: 4 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Scott, Wilson), 0 opposed, 1 absent (Councilor Kelly).

Others present:

Michael Potere – Assistant Clerk of Committees; Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison; Lorraine Moorehouse – Fleet Manager; Michael Richards – IAM Director of Finance Administration; Jon Bronenkant – Public Space Planner, OSPCD; Michael Mastrobuoni – Budget Director; Jeffrey DiGregorio – Captain, Police Department; Karin Carroll – Director of Health & Human Services; Julie Spurr-Knight – Finance and Administration Director; Brad Rawson – Mobility Director, OSPCD; Cindy Amara – City Solicitor; Jill Lathan – Commissioner of DPW.

Roll Call

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

- 1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1383](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of September 12, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

Contracts & Easements

- 2. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1316](#)) Requesting approval to extend and amend a contract with Warner Larson Incorporated for an additional three years, and a revised amount of \$123,683.35, for the redesign and improvements of the Auxiliary Sports Fields at Dilboy Park.

Planner Bronenkant explained that this Item reflects an extension of a contract that was delayed during the pandemic, noting that the design is 90% complete and this request will permit the vendor to complete it so construction can begin. Planner Bronenkant added that the additional funding is also necessary to produce engineering reports on stormwater management to reduce flooding in the fields.

Chair Wilson expressed support for this Item, and emphasized how important it is to address flooding in the field to increase opportunities for community engagement.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

Transfers

- 3. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1260](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$2,105.53 from the Salary Contingency Account to the Medicare Account for Medicare tax reimbursement.

Deputy Director Schneider Collins explained that this request reflects an inadvertent error that caused a higher percentage of some employees' wages to be deducted for Medicare, and this amount will be returned to those employees accordingly.

Chair Wilson asked if people who no longer work for the city will also be reimbursed, and Deputy Director Schneider Collins confirmed that they would.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

Prior Year Invoices

- 4. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1348](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$118.44 using available funds in the Department of Infrastructure and Management Office Supplies Account for office supplies.

Director Richards stated this reflects an invoice from W.B. Mason for miscellaneous office supplies that was received on June 28, 2023, but was processed late due to a miscommunication.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 5. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1160](#)) Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$3,867.08 using available funds in the Health and Human Services Professional & Technical Services Account for revenue management consulting services.

Chair Wilson stated that this would be taken together with Item 6 (ID # 23-1246), noting that the two Items reflect an identical request.

Director Carroll stated that this Item reflects an invoice that fell through the cracks when it was sent to a staff member who retired, and the city was only

recently notified about it.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 6. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1246](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$3,867.08 using available funds in the Health and Human Services Professional and Technical Services Account for Public Consulting Group for Medicaid billing services.

Chair Wilson stated that this would be taken together with Item 5 (ID # 23-1160), noting that the two Items reflect an identical request.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE PLACED ON FILE**

- 7. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1251](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$2,684 using available funds in the Health and Human Services Professional and Technical Services Account for The Throne Depot for portable restrooms.

Director Carroll stated this Item reflects a slightly larger than anticipated invoice for the vendor responsible for providing portable toilets during the past year due to the placement of additional facilities, and that this invoice is for the period ending in June 2023.

Chair Wilson expressed support for the Item, and noted that the Portland Loos will likely alleviate some of the need for this type of vendor invoice.

Councilor Kelly asked why the figure of \$2,684 in the Item description did not match the invoice attached thereto, which listed the amount due as \$671, and Director Mastrobuoni explained that the Item request reflects four months of billing at the \$671 figure listed in the attached invoice.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

Resolutions

- 8. Resolution (ID # [23-1291](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Administration update this Council regarding progress toward Portland Loos.

Director Richards stated that the city recently entered into a manufacturing contract with Madden Fabrication to produce the Portland Loos, noting that it took longer than anticipated to finalized because some of the things

requested by the vendor, such as payment upfront, are prohibited under state law. Director Richards continued that the production of the Portland Loos is underway, but that they likely will not arrive in time to install before Spring 2024, but will likely be operational by Summer 2024.

Chair Wilson asked why Madden Fabrication asked for unlawful contract provisions in the first place, and Director Richards replied that the vendor misunderstood the law because they had been previously engaged by other municipalities through a contractor, rather than directly by the municipalities, and contractors are permitted to pay vendors upfront, whereas municipalities are not.

Councilor Clingan asked if the Portland Loos are being designed to be operational year-round, including during cold winter months, and Director Richards replied that the department specified operating temperatures as low as -5 degrees Fahrenheit in their bid packages.

Councilor Scott asked when the Portland Loos would be operational in Union Square, and Director Richards replied that the anticipated delivery date is on or around April 1, 2024.

Commissioner Lathan noted that the operation and maintenance of the Portland Loos would require additional funding and wanted to be upfront with the Committee about expecting requests for the same in the future.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Grant Acceptances

- 9. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1127](#))

Requesting approval to accept and expend an additional \$300,000, with no new match required, from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Infectious Disease & Laboratory Sciences to the Health and Human Services Department for COVID-19 case investigation and contact tracing.

Director Carroll explained that this Item reflects an extension of a grant from the state's Department of Public Health for COVID tracing, and will fund, among other things, an epidemiologist who will monitor data trends in Somerville and some neighboring communities.

Chair Wilson expressed support for this Item, and added that it is good that the city is still engaged in contact tracing and case investigation given the recent spike in COVID numbers.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 10. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1244](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$61,710 grant that requires a match, from Metro North Regional Employment Board to the Health and Human Services Department for YouthWorks Summer Program.

Director Carroll stated that this Item reflects an annual grant for the city’s summer youth job program.

Chair Wilson asked when the match for the grant will be requested, and Director Carroll indicated that the finance team could provide more information and that it would be communicated to the Committee when available.

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

- 11. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1252](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$3,830 grant with no new match required, from the Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General to the Health and Human Services Department for the FY 2024 Healthy Summer Youth Jobs program.

Director Carroll stated this is an annual grant to support summer youth hiring, and this amount will support two youths employed by the city this summer.

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

- 12. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1234](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$250,000 grant with no new match required, from MA Department of Housing and Community Development to the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development Mobility Division for the study/design of sound walls for interstate-93 near the Mystic housing developments.

Director Rawson stated that this grant is intended to begin preliminary engineering tasks and community engagement regarding the construction of sound walls for Interstate 93 near the Mystic housing developments, however it does not reflect the full buildable engineering and design, which will take more development and additional resources in the future.

Councilor Clingan expressed support for this Item, noting that this is an important first step in a process that many of his constituents have been requesting, and added that this is a complex process due to the condition of

probable the installation site.

Councilor Kelly asked about the timetable for completing the study, and Director Rawson replied that a timeline has not yet established a timeline, but that these types of studies typically take between 9 and 12 months. Councilor Kelly asked when the study would begin, and Director Rawson replied that this coming winter is a reasonable expectation, and that once the study is complete, it would take another 1-2 years to complete the design and construction.

Chair Wilson expressed support for this Item, and added that the installation of vegetation walls could enhance the efficacy of the sound reduction.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

13. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1262](#))

Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$13,616.79 grant with no new match required, from the Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department for the purchase of ten motorcycle operator headsets that include microphones.

Captain DiGregorio stated that this Item will fund the installation of hands-free headsets into the helmets for motorcycle officers.

Councilor Scott asked about the absence of documentation regarding the applications or conditions for this item, and explained that those documents are important to determine where the grant funding is coming from, and whether this is based upon an independent grant or if it is taking money from a larger pool from an existing grant. Councilor Kelly shared Councilor Scott's concerns. Captain DiGregorio stated that he would look into obtaining those documents and provide them to Councilor Scott as soon as possible. Councilors Scott and Kelly indicated they would support this Item based on Captain DiGregorio's representations, but would be inclined to sever it and send it back to the Committee at this week's City Council meeting if that documentation is not provided in advance.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 14. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1263](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$75,000 grant with no new match required, from the Boston Mayor's Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department to support the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) sustainability and upgrades.

Captain DiGregorio stated that these funds would be used to upgrade the Police Department's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) by updating its physical space, IT equipment, laptops, and furniture.

Councilor Kelly stated that it would be helpful to know what, specifically, would be purchased with these funds, and asked if the EOC is located at the department's headquarters or off-site. Captain DiGregorio stated that the EOC is a large room at headquarters that functions as an EOC when necessary, and is otherwise used for officer training and other community events.

As with Item 13 (ID # 23-1262), Councilors Scott and Kelly expressed concern regarding the absence of documentation regarding the applications or conditions for this item. Captain DiGregorio stated that he would also look into obtaining those documents for this Item and provide them to Councilor Scott as soon as possible. Councilors Scott and Kelly again indicated they would support this Item based on Captain DiGregorio's representations, but would also be inclined to sever it and send it back to the Committee at this week's City Council meeting if that documentation is not provided in advance.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

Appropriations

- 15. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1298](#)) Requesting approval to appropriate \$513,421 from the Capital Stabilization Fund to replace seven police vehicles.

Captain DiGregorio stated that this Item would fund the purchase of seven new police vehicles, which would be used as the primary patrol vehicles for the Police Department. Captain DiGregorio added that these vehicles are in constant use, would be replacing the current vehicles that are approximately four years old, and are hybrid vehicles capable of supporting officers responding to emergencies in all weather conditions.

Councilor Kelly asked for clarification as to where these funds would come from, and Director Mastrobuoni replied that they would come from the Capital Project Stabilization Fund. Councilor Kelly asked about the current balance of that fund, and Director Mastrobuoni replied that the fund currently has \$11 million, \$8 million of which is earmarked for the Capital

Investment Plan, leaving around \$3 million flexible.

Councilor Kelly asked if the amount in this Item is related to the \$500,000 for vehicles allocated during the FY 2024 budget, and Director Mastrobuoni replied that that allocation was for vehicles for other departments. Fleet Manager Moorehouse and Director Spurr-Knight further confirmed that the \$500,000 approved during the FY 2024 budget was being used to procure vehicles for Animal Control, the DPW, and traffic and parking.

Councilor Kelly expressed concern that the amount requested in this Item reflects a 100% increase in the ordinary maintenance spending for the Police Department, and further expressed frustration that this request was not made during the FY 2024 budget process despite the fact that it could have been because the Police Department likely knew about it beforehand. Director Mastrobuoni replied that vehicle purchase requests are not typically included during budget discussions, and that the \$500,000 outlay in the FY 2024 budget for vehicles for other departments was unusual. Chair Wilson asked where this request would have been made if it were included in the FY 2024 budget process, and Director Mastrobuoni replied that it likely would have been within the capital outlay vehicles object, not under the Police Department’s ordinary maintenance.

Councilor Scott expressed frustration and declined to support this Item because no vehicle has been procured for Animal Control even though the request for that vehicle was made before the request for Police Department vehicles. Captain DiGregorio explained that the process for procuring police vehicles has been underway for a long time, and that the opportunity to purchase these vehicles now has been unheard of during the past year; Director Spurr-Knight added that the city happened to be in the right place at the right time to have a chance to purchase these vehicles.

Councilor Clingan expressed support for the Item, noting that it is crucially important for the city’s first responders to be able to rapidly respond to emergencies without having to deal with unreliable vehicles.

Chair Wilson held a Roll Call vote on this Item: 4 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Kelly, and Wilson), 1 opposed (Councilor Scott), 0 absent.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

NAY: Vice Chair Scott

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Kelly

16. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1204](#)) Requesting approval to appropriate \$150,000 from the Salary & Wage Stabilization Fund to the Police Department - Personnel Services - Other Lump Sum Benefits Account to settle pending litigation.
- City Solicitor Amara explained that this Item reflects the second installment payment for a lawsuit settlement pertaining to FLSA litigation against the city, noting that the third installment will be coming next year.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld
- ABSENT:** City Councilor At Large Kelly
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17. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1351](#)) Requesting approval to appropriate \$100,000 from the Encore Artist and Cultural Support Stabilization Fund to support Local Cultural Council grants to artists, organizations, and schools.
- Chair Wilson noted that a memorandum regarding this Item was attached to the Agenda.
- Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked the mechanisms in place for informing the city's teachers about these grants and how they can apply for them, and Legislative Liaison Carrillo replied that she would contact Director Jenkins and provide additional information when it becomes available.
- RESULT:** **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
- AYE:** Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld
- ABSENT:** City Councilor At Large Kelly

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2023-09-26 Arts Council Finance Committee 9_26_2023 (with 23-1351)