



## CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 20, 2019  
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

| Attendee Name                   | Title                     | Status  | Arrived |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------|---------|
| William A. White Jr.            | Chair                     | Present |         |
| Mary Jo Rossetti                | Vice Chair                | Present |         |
| Matthew McLaughlin              | Ward One City Councilor   | Present |         |
| Ben Ewen-Campen                 | Ward Three City Councilor | Present |         |
| Katjana Ballantyne              | Ward Seven City Councilor | Present |         |
| Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott | Ward Two City Councilor   | Present |         |
| Jesse Clingan                   | Ward Four City Councilor  | Present |         |
| Mark Niedergang                 | Ward Five City Councilor  | Present |         |
| Lance L. Davis                  | Ward Six City Councilor   | Present |         |
| Stephanie Hirsch                | City Councilor At Large   | Present |         |
| Wilfred N. Mbah                 | City Councilor at Large   | Present |         |

Others present: Mike Mastrobuoni - SomerStat, OSPCD Personnel: George Proakis, Alan Inacio, Sarah Lewis, Michael Feloney, Ellen Shachter, Tom Galligani and Brad Rawson, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place in the Council Chamber and was called to order at 6:18 PM by Chairman White and adjourned at 11:14 PM.

### **FY-20 Departmental Budget Review and any associated departmental financial matters.**

The committee reviewed the proposed budgets for the following sections within the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, (OSPCD):

#### **Administration**

Mr. Proakis presented a brief overview of the department and said that implementation and updating of SomerVision continues. Trans & Infra has been split into a Mobility Division and a Urban Forestry/Public Space division. The professional development lines (572000 & 572001) in each division has been moved to the administration budget.

Councilor Hirsch asked about moving the OCDBG process to HHS. Mr. Proakis explained that HUD expects those grants to be handled by OSPCD, adding that an Outreach Coordinator position has been created to help with the process.

Councilor Rossetti noted that OSPCD was awarded approximately \$3 million in grants and Mr. Proakis explained that many of the department's salaries are charged against some of those grants.

Mr. Inacio addressed a question about two '960' employees in the Administration Division which are funded by OCDBG funds and are not listed in the budget book. Councilor Scott requested the salary information for those employees. Mr. Inacio explained that line 530010 for legal services was not included in the book, as the figures weren't ready when the book was printed. Additional legal services will be needed, but not in the Administration division. Councilor Scott requested that the line be included in the final printing of the approved budget.

## **Planning & Zoning**

Sarah Lewis spoke about the department's work during FY-19, the launch of SomerVision2040 and plans for the department during the coming fiscal year. Councilor Hirsch asked if there will be a deep level of analysis for the components of SomerVision so that informed decisions may be made regarding affordable housing. Ms. Lewis explained that the various divisions will provide the details for their portions of the plan.

Councilor Niedergang expressed concern that a design review reference wasn't included in the goals review. He also commented that the Planning Board has an alternate and a full member seat that are unfilled, and asked when they will be filled. Mr. Proakis replied that 2 candidates were not confirmed by the Council and that the last pool of candidates didn't have the qualifications being sought. He will continue to make an effort to assemble another pool of candidates.

Councilor Ballantyne inquired about Professional & Technical Services expenses and asked what was done at BrickBottom for \$75,000. Mr. Proakis offered to provide a breakdown of P&T before the end of tonight's meeting.

## **Housing**

Mr. Feloney presented is department's budget request. Councilor McLaughlin inquired about a property on Illinois Avenue and Mr. Feloney replied that the renovation and rehab work is underway. To date, 53 units have been acquired and, of those, there are 11 vacancies. Councilor Scott requested a list of all the acquired properties along with their estimated completion dates. Councilor Hirsch asked how a plan would be developed to reach a specified percentage of affordable housing, i.e., what would it take, how many properties would be needed, which department(s) would fund it, etc.? Councilor Ewen-Campen inquired about a universal wait list and Mr. Feloney replied that studies have been undertaken to determine how this is being handled by other communities. Councilor Rossetti noted that the Ordinary Maintenance budget was under-spent during FY-19 and questioned why the requested amount for FY-20 is so high. Councilor Scott commented that the unused funds could have been used to hire another person in the department.

## **Housing Stability**

Ellen Shachter spoke about the makeup of this department and the changes from the FY-19 budget. The P&T line is at \$300,000 and includes a request for \$100,000 for a rent stabilization program made up of a Section 8 incentive program and a wrap-around program to cover various

expenses, e.g., for moving, cleaning and stabilizing efforts. OHS works collaboratively with HHS to share information.

### **Economic Development**

Mr. Galligani reviewed the activities of this department. Councilor Mbah asked when the requested data regarding minority-owned business would be ready and Mr. Galligani replied that this data is not collected due to the time and resources that would be needed to do so. Councilor Mbah requested data on the Union Square businesses that have a relationship with the Economic Development department. Councilor McLaughlin asked about any short term uses for 90 Washington Street and was told that no decisions have been made, as yet. Councilor Scott commented that there is a need for the Economic Development department to develop a program to retain businesses in the city.

### **Mobility**

Mr. Rawson presented the department's budget request. Councilor Niedergang commented that there needs to be more staff in this department to address the important traffic concerns in the city. Councilor Rossetti asked if any of the \$14 million in grant funds awarded could be used to hire additional staff. Mr. Proakis pointed out that OSPCD has taken that about as far as it can, already. Councilor Ballantyne stated her desire for a new parking plan and asked what the holdup is. Mr. Rawson replied that Mobility is working with Traffic and Parking on this matter. Mr. Proakis was asked the question and provided a similar answer. Councilor Ballantyne relayed information provided to her by Planning staff regarding the ability to restrict parking and wants to know what the problem is. Mr. Proakis will provide a response by Monday. Councilor Ewen-Campen spoke about bike lanes, saying that there are not enough.

### **Public Space & Urban Forestry**

Mr. Rawson presented the department's budget request. Councilor Niedergang asked why the city doesn't have a full-time tree warden and advocated for additional community gardens.

### **Redevelopment Authority**

Councilor Ewen-Campen recused himself from all discussion of this department. Mr. Galligani reviewed the activities of this department.

### **Handouts:**

- Correction to Pg. 144 of Budget book
- Net Funding Analysis