



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, June 27, 2023

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 8:22 pm with a roll call vote of all in favor (Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Kelly, Councilor Scott, and Chair Wilson), none opposed, and none absent.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo – Mayor’s Office, Brian Postlewaite – DPW Engineering, Alan Inacio – OSPCD, Jeffrey DiGregorio – SPD, Christopher Ward – SPD, Christopher Major – Fire, Matthew Mitchell – HHS, Melissa Woods – Capital Projects and Planning, Michael Richards – IAM, Edward Bean – Auditing, Anne Gill – Personnel, Ellen Collins – Personnel, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Jake Wilson, Vice Chair Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Charlotte Kelly, Jesse Clingan and Ben Ewen-Campen

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-0842](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of May 23, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

2. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1045](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of June 5, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

3. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1046](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee of the Whole Meeting of June 5, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

4. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1047](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of June 6, 2023.
- RESULT:** ACCEPTED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen
5. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1048](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of June 7, 2023.
- RESULT:** ACCEPTED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen
6. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1057](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of June 13, 2023.
- RESULT:** ACCEPTED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen
7. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1082](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of June 14, 2023.
- RESULT:** ACCEPTED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen
8. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1083](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee of the Whole meeting of June 15, 2023.
- RESULT:** ACCEPTED
AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

9. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1085](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of June 20, 2023.
- RESULT:** ACCEPTED
- AYE:** Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen
10. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-1086](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee of the Whole meeting of June 21, 2023.
- RESULT:** ACCEPTED
- AYE:** Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Contracts and Easements

11. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1063](#)) Requesting approval of the First Amendment to Fiber Optic Communications Easement Agreement with TOWARDEX.
- Dir. Postlewaite explained that TOWARDEX is a fiber optic communications company proposing an extension of an existing duct bank on Inner Belt Rd, which is privately owned by the City of Somerville.
- RESULT:** RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED
- AYE:** Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen
12. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-1088](#)) Requesting authorization to seek funding and enter into related agreements with the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant, appropriate funding, and dedicate 217 Somerville Avenue as open space and recreational use in perpetuity.
- RESULT:** RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED
- AYE:** Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Communications and Discussions

13. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0951](#)) Requesting approval to accept the 2023-2024 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Annual Action Plan for the Community Development Block Grant, Home Investment Partnership and Emergency Solutions Grant programs, totaling \$3,321,097.
- Dir. Inacio said that this is an extension year that will close out the 5-year

Action Plan, and that his team will start working on the next 5-year plan in the fall. At the request of Councilor Kelly, Dir. Inacio described where each grant would be allocated: one dedicated to addressing homelessness, one for new housing developments, and then one grant that is more flexible. He said that the city was required to list out projects and allocated funding. Councilor Kelly also asked where the funding for overnight shelter accommodation goes. Dir. Inacio said that historically, 80-90% of ESG funding has gone to Somerville Homeless Coalition shelters, and that Arlington and Somerville were a standalone continuum of care, but Somerville joined the balance of state in the last few years.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Appropriations

14. Mayor's Request Requesting the appropriation of \$80,000 from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Fund Undesignated Fund to Vida Real for continued restoration of the bell tower at 404 Broadway.

(ID # [23-0947](#))

Dir. Inacio explained that the project was put on hold during the pandemic and noted additional issues found when resuming construction that were not in the original scope. He also cited rising construction costs.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Lease Agreements

15. Mayor's Request Requesting approval of a multi-year lease agreement for the East Somerville Police Station.

(ID # [23-0667](#))

Capt. DiGregorio explained that Mudflat Studios is not renewing their lease at the end of the month and that SPD was looking for alternatives. He said that SPD received one bid back for 77 Broadway that is higher in cost, but meets their needs and should provide a seamless transition. Councilor Scott expressed concerns at the cost of the new space at \$30 per square foot. They also noted that the new space is more than double the size of the previous space. Capt. DiGregorio described operations at the East Somerville Police station and said one idea for the increased space is to make a “soft interview room” for domestic abuse survivors and other similar cases.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

ABSENT: Ward Four City Councilor Clingan

Transfers

- 16. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0847](#)) Requesting approval of a transfer of \$8,039.02 from the Police Department Personal Services Overtime Account to the Police Department Special Items Grant Match Account to fund the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition Community Safety Initiative Shannon Grant match.

Taken together with item 23-0846. Deputy Chief Ward said that the grant is centered on developing strategies to address youth violence in four specific topics: opportunity provisions, community mobilization, social intervention, and suppression. He noted that this is a change from last year’s focus on hotspot policing. Councilor Kelly asked for a breakdown of work. Deputy Chief Ward said that 75% of the grant will focus on community outreach and engagement, and the last 25% will be for hotspot policing - but only if there is heightened gun violence in the summer. Otherwise, SPD will reallocate that 25% into community outreach. Councilor Scott asked how much will go towards hosting a basketball tournament. Deputy Chief Ward said that SPD is planning two games this season, possibly three, which will use 25% of the funds.

Councilor Kelly reaffirmed her stance against hotspot policing, but noted that SPD is steering away from that strategy in focusing on community outreach.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

NAY: City Councilor At Large Kelly

Grant Acceptances

- 17. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0846](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$24,117.07 grant that requires a match, from the Metropolitan Mayors Coalition Community Safety Initiative to the Police Department for youth violence prevention.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

NAY: City Councilor At Large Kelly

- 18. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0813](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$6,781 Student Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) grant, with no new match required, from the Department of Fire Services to the Fire Department for fire prevention education for students.

Taken together with item 23-0814. Deputy Chief Major noted that, in addition to education opportunities for students and seniors, the SAFE grant allows the Fire Department to supply seniors with specific items related to fire and safety, such as non-slip socks.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

19. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-0814](#))

Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$2,677 Senior Student Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) grant, with no new match required, from the Department of Fire Services to the Fire Department for fire prevention education for older adults.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

20. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-1065](#))

Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$500,000 grant amendment with no new match required, from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services to the Health and Human Services Department for regional youth substance misuse prevention efforts.

Dir. Mitchell explained that Somerville is the lead on the program and fiscal parts of the grant with Arlington, Lexington and Everett. Somerville has been working on a needs assessment and in the upcoming third year of the grant, will be starting to implement strategy and intervention.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Bonding

21. Mayor's Request
(ID # [23-0844](#))

Requesting authorization to borrow \$6,430,638 in a bond, and to appropriate the same amount for the Assembly Square Fire Station fit-out.

Dir. Woods shared a presentation with updates on the fire station, including a floor plan, and what the additional cost requested includes. Councilor Scott initiated a discussion about the timeline of costs. Dir. Woods said that the original estimate for \$3.9 million was just for construction and did not include elements such as design or fixtures. Councilor Scott referred to a presentation shared in October 2021, attached to the item, and noted that presentation showed it would be cheaper to lease the space from a developer and use community benefits funds to offset the cost.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld mentioned exhaust from the apparatus bay permeating living spaces, but Dir. Woods said that the space is being designed with high and low pressure areas to prevent the air from mixing. A highlight of discussion of the floor plans was the point that a ladder truck will not fit at this location. Multiple councilors expressed concern over the efficacy of fighting fires in tall buildings without a ladder truck, and Dir. Woods said that the Fire Chief, not present, could speak to firefighting methods. Chair Wilson asked if there was still time to consider modifying the dimensions of the space to fit a ladder truck, and Dir. Woods said that would not be possible.

Councilor Kelly asked about the timeline of construction and whether Dir. Woods thought the funds could be used in time. Dir. Woods said construction and the bidding process will most likely start in January 2024 and noted that base construction has already begun, but they are anticipating that funds will carry over into FY25.

Councilor Kelly requested a copy of the lease be provided to the City Council.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

NAY: Vice Chair Scott

Ordinances

- 22. Ordinance (ID # [23-0827](#))

By Councilor Scott and Councilor Wilson
Amending Section 2-323 of the Code of Ordinances, Salary Ranges, to provide cost-of-living adjustments for School Committee Members and City Councilors.

Councilor Scott requested to discharge the item without recommendation, given the conversation in item 23-0925.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE DISCHARGED WITH NO RECOMMENDATION**

- 23. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0925](#))

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.

Dir. Gill said that most of the changes to the ordinance are to correct clerical errors. Councilor Kelly requested to review the changes line by line, which Deputy Director Collins presented. She noted that new positions from FY24 were not in the amendment, as this item was submitted prior to approval of

the budget, but there are 14 new positions from the FY23 budget. Nine positions were removed.

Councilor Clingan commented that the “Community Outreach and Harm Reduction Director” listed in the ordinance is the Community Outreach Health and Recovery Director. He also asked about the ADA Coordinator, a position housed in RSJ and currently filled. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked if the city collects demographic data by grade, to which the answer was yes. Councilor Scott had concerns that changes to staff salaries made in previous fiscal years had not appeared in the ordinance until now, and questioned whether the ordinance dictates salaries or the other way around. Councilor Clingan also requested changes be brought to the Council’s attention promptly.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

NAY: Vice Chair Scott

Orders

24. Order
 (ID # [23-0457](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld
That this City Council discuss data from the FY 2023 budget hearings and assess the budget hearing process for FY 2024.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Unfinished Business

25. Councilor Kelly moved to reduce line 01-12152 of the Executive Office Administration Ordinary Maintenance budget to \$0. The motion was laid on the table at the June 21, 2023 Committee meeting.

Councilor Kelly withdrew the motion.

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2023-06-27 Assembly Square Fit-Out 6.27.23
- Finance - 2023-06-27 FY 2023 & FY 2024 Departmental Budget Review Hearings Data (with 23-0457)