



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 21, 2021
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Vice Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Lauren Racaniello-Mayor's Office, Ed Bean-Auditor/Finance, Michael Mastrobuoni-SomerStat, Jill Lathan-DPW, Anne Gill-Personnel, Christine Dell'Anno-DPW, Eric Weisman-DPW, Michael Bowler-DPW, Ben Waldrip-DPW

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:24 p.m. by Chairperson Scott and adjourned at 10:47 p.m.

1. Review of the FY-22 Budget

- DPW

Jill Lathan stated the Personal Service budget is up 4% with the Ordinary Maintenance budget reduced by 4%.

Ms. Lathan stated that over the past 7 seven months, DPW has been working on identifying deficits that will require systemic changes. They have looked into best practices to include improved oversight. She discussed the core values including customer service, purchasing and auditing meetings to improve the systems. They have a clerical mailbox to eliminate errors of invoices. There is a protocol for grievances between leadership and staff. Ms. Lathan proposed a preventative maintenance manager to oversee all school and city buildings with attention to details. She would like to transfer the tree crew to the grounds division. Ms. Lathan would like to hire a day supervisor for the school buildings. Additionally, they proposed increased safety training budget for driving, plowing and other areas. She seeks to improve resident perception and improve customer service of the 311 requests.

Councilor Mbah asked questions about the demographic of all employees within DPW. He will follow up with personnel for this information. Chair Scott asked Mr. Mastrobuoni about headcounts of the departments. Mr. Mastrobuoni will have this information available for tomorrow's meeting.

- Administration

Christine Dell'Anno DPW, who is the interim finance and administration director, talked about customer service and team work. They have a paperless process, open discussions with the union and working with purchasing and auditing. Additionally, they are working to increase employee training.

Councilor Rossetti asked the commissioner if she is also in charge of Parks & Recreation, working with the program developer. Councilor Rossetti also asked how long the commissioner is on leave. Ms. Racaniello will reach out to personnel and provide Councilor Rossetti with an answer.

Councilor Rossetti asked about an open vacancy head clerk and principal clerk positions. Mr. Weisman stated they made an offer for head clerk to start in July. No internal candidates for principal clerk and this position will be posted outside. Mr. Weisman stated the positions are crucial and believe they can hire before September. Councilor Rossetti would like clarification of when the job was posted.

Councilor Rossetti asked about line 529007 Hazardous Waste Removal for the number spent or encumbered of the \$140,000. Ms. Dell'Anno stated they spent almost \$100,000 and the balance will be moved to sanitation.

Councilor Rossetti also inquired about line 530018 Police Detail and why this line is double in this year's budget for police detail. Ms. Dell'Anno stated DPW is ramping up to handle requests that were put on hold due to COVID. Mr. Mastrobuoni stated this line previously spent was \$30,000 in FY19 and \$20,000 in FY18.

Councilor Mbah asked if the position for finance director has been posted yet. Ms. Dell'Anno has been acting director for two weeks. Ms. Lathan stated there has been quite a bit of turnover for the finance director's position. Chair Scott asked Mr. Mastrobuoni about names lining up with the position and if there is a link for the positions.

- Buildings

Mike Bowler DPW Buildings & Grounds supervisor.

It was stated that Personal Services is down 24% and Ordinary Maintenance is up 14%.

Mr. Bowler stated that Buildings and grounds will be divided into separate divisions.

One of their large accomplishments was to create the scope to support structure for the new high school. Worked to install protective barriers due to COVID-19.

Councilor Rossetti asked about the \$1.8M for the HVAC system. She also asked about the request to create a preventive maintenance position's role and responsibilities.

HMEO position is open for the buildings budget. There will be three full time open positions for the building's division.

Mr. Mastrobuoni will combine the two lines listed for line 527001 that is listed twice on the budget sheet.

Chair Scott asked about the roofing line and if the work goes to outside contractors.

- Grounds

Mr. Bowler stated this division will also have a superintendent.

Ben Waldrip stated the Personal Services budget is \$1.97M and Ordinary Maintenance is \$730,000 to maintain parks & playgrounds

One of the changes in the budget is due to the creation of a new tree warden position.

The grounds division will continue to maintain and improve the city's parks and green spaces.

Councilor Ballantyne asked if he was overseeing Lincoln Park and asked for the status of the field portion used for soccer. Mr. Waldrip stated there is a different soil mixture for the field. There was a landscape and irrigation contract. Councilor Ballantyne stated that everyone is stating the field looks awful and how will the field improve. Mr. Waldrip stated they are thinking about a compost plan as a way to improve the field to help retain the moisture. The field was just seeded a couple of weeks ago. Councilor Ballantyne asked for feedback from the contractor who designed the field. Mr. Waldrip has had several conversations with the contractor and it appears there are a lot of disagreements with how to maintain the field. Councilor Ballantyne asked Mr. Waldrip for information to make sure the city is not doing business with the vendors who worked on the Lincoln Park field. Councilor Ballantyne stated she is concerned that the city could not get the field correct for Lincoln Park and that the city may not be able to have the work done correctly for Dilboy field. She would like something in writing to have better understanding of the problems with the field.

Councilor Mbah asked about the state of the community gardens. The Grounds team deliver a lot of mulch and stone dusk to the community gardens. The maintenance is done by the community gardeners.

Chair Scott asked about an invoice received from a landscape vendor. Mr. Waldrip did speak to the vendor discussing how vague the invoices were and having to put more details on the invoices. The chair asked why the city is not doing the work themselves. Mr. Waldrip stated the only time to maintain the field is early in the morning and it's challenging to get staffing there in the morning. The chair asked about vacancies and there is only one open position, a special heavy position that can run a lawn mover and other equipment.

Chair Scott 524002 would like a breakdown of this line item. Mr. Waldrip will have the information by tomorrow.

- School Custodians

Mr. Bowler stated Personal Services is up 4.7% and Ordinary Maintenance increased 20%.

There is only one open position who will start within the next week or two.

There are only two schools cleaned by outside contractors. The contract is up the end of July with a renewal year. This contract is one of the state's contracts and is a union contract. The chair asked Ms. Lathan to maybe consider a one-year contract.

Councilor Mbah asked what the process is for testing products. Mr. Bowler stated they look at state contracts and get recommendations from PTA, parents, teachers and custodians that would be green and healthy environmental products for the students.

- Waste

Mr. Weisman stated FY22 will improve turnaround time. The sanitation line increased 8.1% rubbish removal. Recycled line increased as well.

Councilor White asked about the contract that was with Russell that was acquired by

Resource Waste Services. Mr. Weisman stated they refer to them as Boston Carting and they agreed to continue with the contract that goes to December 31, 2024.

- Highway

Mr. Weisman stated that Personal Services is down 3.4% and Ordinary Maintenance is flat. The budget reflects the transition of tree crew to newly-created Grounds Division. Councilor Ballantyne asked about sidewalk repairs and thought it fell under IAM. Mr. Weisman stated large scale projects are funded by IAM, broken sidewalks, small scale are repaired by DPW. Councilor Ballantyne asked who analyzes the sidewalk and determine who does the repair. Mr. Weisman stated they meet with IAM in the beginning of the season and review requests from 311.

Councilor Rossetti asked about the transfer of the tree crew to grounds. She received communication that this came as a surprise to the tree crew and was not negotiated in good faith. Mr. Weisman intended to meet all bargaining obligations. Ms. Gill, director of personnel, appeared before the committee regarding the transfer of the employees. Mr. Weisman stated he spoke with the union president a couple of weeks ago. Ms. Gill stated they have started discussions and they are not in agreement with the specifications of the positions. Ms. Gill believes there should be subject matter experts, training and credentials for these positions.

Councilor Rossetti suggested personnel have the negotiations with the union before coming to the committee and before transferring employees.

Chair Scott stated there are multiple concerns about these positions around transfer and seniority bid rights. He also referenced MGL 150e and how it's necessary to negotiate in good faith. Ms. Gill stated the positions have been vacant for a while.

Mr. Weisman stated there are 12 vacancies in DPW with 9 that are SMEA. Three of the positions should be filled by the end of the month.

- Lights and Lines

Mr. Weisman stated the Personal Services budget is up 3.2% and Ordinary Maintenance is unchanged.

Mr. Weisman stated that in FY21, they responded to 2,200 fire alarms service calls. The electrician is the only vacancy who will start later this month.

- Fleet

Mr. Weisman stated there were 550 repairs and updated 14 hybrid vehicles. The 1.7% decrease to rightsized R&M vehicles, reduced software and services.

Councilor Rossetti had questions about acting commission of DPW position, asked if the commission is still an employee of the city. Also asked how long Ms. Lathan will be acting DPW commissioner.

Councilor Rossetti suggested the need for an executive session to provide the city councilors with an update on acting DPW commissioner. Chair Scott asked Mr.

Mastrobuoni for the salary contingency amount for the city employees.

Chair Scott asked about status of the motor vehicle positions. Ms. Gill will look into this question and provide an update.

- Snow Removal

Mr. Weisman stated this department is developing a pilot program for snow removal on sidewalks for this coming winter.

Chair Scott asked about YTD expenditures \$1.55M with extra \$465,000 encumbered.

Mr. Weisman stated they have spent \$2.1M. The average over the last 5 years has been around \$2M.

Councilor Rossetti asked about the pilot snow program and if they will identify key areas to focus on such as sidewalks on Broadway and School Streets. Mr. Weisman is not sure what this pilot will cost and will be working with purchasing to develop a scope.

- Parks and Recreation

Ms. Lathan stated the Personal Services budget is up 7% and Ordinary Maintenance is up .6%.

They are requesting 5 program coordinator positions that have been reclassified for FY22 and renamed to Specialized Program Coordinators.

Parks is looking to advance special needs program along with more variety for the adult's program.

Councilor Ballantyne asked about the gender consultant and if the evaluation has been completed that they were working on last year. The evaluation has not been started yet as it took some time to find the right consultant for this project.

- Field Maintenance

Mr. Waldrip stated that Personal Services is up 9% and Ordinary Maintenance is up 21%.

Mr. Waldrip stated there is no top dressing at Lincoln Pak, but there is top dressing at Dilboy Auxiliary field.

Councilor Ballantyne asked about Dilboy Auxiliary field with concerns that the city will spend money on athletic fields and the same issues will happen as with Lincoln Park.

Councilor Mbah asked if all city parks and grounds have been tested for contamination.

Mr. Waldrip stated that Parks and Recreation would not be the department to handle that question.

Unfinished Business

(ID # 24992): That the administration strike the language “related to ongoing/exiting litigation” from the 3rd paragraph of the Ordinary Maintenance Changes narrative on the City Council page in the FY-22 Budget book.

RESULT:

LAID ON THE TABLE

(ID # 24993): That the mayor allocate appropriate funds for hardware to administrate hybrid meetings and also provide funding for the City Council or Clerks of Committees

budget for support staff.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24994): That the mayor set aside an additional \$300,000 in a segregated fund to be available for Racial and Social Justice appropriations mid-year.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24995): That the mayor appropriate \$80,000 for a community engagement specialist for the City Council and for committee meetings.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24996): That the mayor create 2 fully funded new positions (one Review Planner and one Violation Inspector for existing infrastructure) within ISD, requiring hires to have demonstrable experience and knowledge on ADA compliance matters.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24997): That the administration provide for the creation of a position starting July 1, 2021 for a clerk to assist with the planned superannuation of an employee and ensure a fully staffed department, in the amount of \$90,000 for FY22.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24998): That the administration provide for the creation of a position starting October 1, 2021 for an administrative clerk to assist with ARPA and fund tracking documentation, in the amount of \$50,000 for FY22.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 24999): That the administration devote roughly \$100,000 in personal services to support the position requests of an additional projector manager and the fractional support from the general fund budget for administrative support for IAM.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 25000): That the administration devote \$1.5 million as requested for the building reconstruction (line 582002) and improvement (line 582003) in Capital Projects.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 25001): Councilor Scott moved that the administration devote \$500,000 for street repairs (line 588002) in Engineering.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 25002): That the administration add \$100,000 to Engineering Personal Services to fund an engineering position for implementation of short-term ADA compliant designs for street and building improvements working in collaboration with DPW.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 25017): That the Police Department Overtime line (513000) be reduced by \$500,000.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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(ID # 25023): That the Administration reconsider its proposed budget by incorporating 10% of ARPA funds towards the FY-22 Budget, given the increase in Water and Sewer rates, Real Estate Taxes, and the High School debt exclusion, coupled with a 9% increase in the proposed FY-22 Budget.

RESULT:	LAID ON THE TABLE
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Referenced Material:

- Somerville Public Safety Data v2
- Niedergang proposals for SPD Budget cuts FY 2022