



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 20, 2026

6:00 PM

This meeting was held virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:03 pm by Chair Wheeler and adjourned at 7:07 pm with a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Link, Strezo, Hardt, Scott and Wheeler), none opposed, and none absent.

Also present: Emily Wisdom - Somerville Police Department Director of Finance and Administration, Brian Postlewaite - Director of Engineering, Ellen Shachter - Office of Housing Stability Director, Yasmine Raddassi - Legislative Liaison, Michael Holland - Somerville Police Department Lieutenant, Matthew Sirigu - Labor Counsel and Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jon Link, City Councilor At Large Kristen Strezo, Ward Seven City Councilor Emily Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott and City Councilor At Large Ben Wheeler

A community budget hearing will be held on Tuesday, February 10, at 6:00 p.m. All Somerville residents are invited to speak to the Finance Committee about budget priorities. Community groups, schools, religious organizations, and other local groups are encouraged to share this information widely. The hearing will be held virtually, with Spanish and Portuguese translation provided, and other languages available upon request by emailing languageaccess@somervillema.gov at least seven days prior to the meeting.

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-1861](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of December 9, 2025.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, City Councilor At Large Strezo, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott and City Councilor At Large Wheeler

Grant and Gift Acceptances

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-1801](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$65,000 grant with no new match required, from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to the Police Department for the Municipal Road Safety Program.

Emily Wisdom, Director of Finance and Administration for the Somerville Police Department, shared that this grant supplements the Department's traffic and safety budget and has been awarded to the City for the past decade. This grant will be divided to cover \$8,112 for community awareness and education materials, \$5,642 for safety items, \$33,930 for traffic safety

enforcement overtime from April through September, and \$17,316 for pedestrian and bicycle safety enforcement overtime from January through May, with a smaller enforcement period in August and September. Director Wisdom stated that community feedback on prior pedestrian and bicycle enforcement campaigns has informed the current proposal, which emphasizes safety education over enforcement, with much of the overtime devoted to educational outreach and material distribution.

Councilor Link requested clarification regarding whether the grant supports campaigns related to cyclists proceeding through pedestrian signals and raised concerns about enforcement in areas with challenging traffic flow. Lieutenant Michael Holland responded that the grant focuses on pedestrian and cyclist safety through both education and enforcement, noting that cyclists are not targeted, though officers may address red-light violations when observed. In response to questions from Councilor Scott, Lieutenant Holland explained that enforcement efforts primarily address crosswalk safety and motor vehicles blocking bike lanes, while non-enforcement activities focus on education, outreach, and the distribution of safety equipment. He added that approximately 95% of citations are issued to motor vehicles. Councilor Scott expressed hope for the grant, citing that the proposed implementation represents a shift from prior grant practices. Councilor Link noted that the use of warnings, when applied fairly, can effectively discourage unsafe behavior without imposing financial penalties.

Chair Wheeler asked about cycling safety supplies funded through the grant. Director Wisdom explained that supplies must be purchased in March and distributed during the campaign period and include 750 safety pamphlets and 660 bicycle safety items, consisting of 500 lighted safety bracelets, 60 helmets, and 100 bicycle light sets. Lieutenant Holland noted that officers distributed these items on the Community Path last year. Councilor Strezo raised concerns about cyclists cutting off pedestrians, and Councilors Strezo and Hardt identified specific areas for Lieutenant Holland to review for potential enforcement.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, City Councilor At Large Strezo, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott and City Councilor At Large Wheeler

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0054](#))

Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$20,000 grant with no new match required, from the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to the Office of Housing Stability for the housing bridge pilot program for seniors.

This item was discussed with item 26-0053.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, City Councilor At Large Strezo, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott and City Councilor At Large Wheeler

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0053](#))

Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$200,000 grant with no new match required, from the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to the Office of Housing Stability for the continuation of the short term housing bridge pilot program.

Ellen Shachter, Director of the Office of Housing Stability discussed this pilot program launched in FY25 to provide short-term housing support for seniors. She noted a 13 percent increase in senior homelessness between 2023 and 2024. The program receives referrals from five senior-serving organizations and provides rental assistance while also screening participants for eligibility for other housing programs. During the past year, the program assisted eight older adult households, allowing them to remain in their homes or transition to permanent affordable housing. In response to a question from Councilor Strezo, Director Shachter stated that of the eight households served, six were single adults, one was an adult couple, and one was an adult with a disabled child, and that all participants were Somerville residents. She explained that the initial \$20,000 grant supports administrative costs, while a \$200,000 grant is dedicated to rental assistance for older adults.

Yasmine Raddassi, Legislative Liaison, noted that the grants are part of the FY26 state local earmarks from the state budget process. Director Shachter added that the funding is currently awarded on an annual basis, and while the Office is exploring options to ensure participants remain housed if funding does not continue, there is hope that the program will expand statewide to provide more permanent access to this support.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, City Councilor At Large Strezo, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott and City Councilor At Large Wheeler

Contracts and Agreements

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0011](#))

Requesting approval of a time-only contract extension for three months with a new expiration date of 3/31/2026, for Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. for design services for the Spring Hill Sewer Separation project.

Brian Postlewaite, Director of Engineering, reported that the construction project at Spring Hill was completed last year, but due to delays by the contractor, the final closeout documents have not yet been submitted. An extension of the contract will allow time for the contractor to prepare and provide these documents. In response to a question from Councilor Strezo, Director Postlewaite noted that while this is not a common occurrence, the project has taken a long time. He added that the funds are available to

complete this, but approval of the extension is needed to use the remaining money for the final documents. Councilor Scott noted that such extensions are not uncommon and can provide an opportunity to ask additional questions about the project.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, City Councilor At Large Strezo, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott and City Councilor At Large Wheeler

Transfers

- 6. Mayor's Request (ID # [26-0088](#))

Requesting approval of a transfer of \$103,421 from the Salary Contingency account to various departmental Personal Services accounts to fund a memorandum of agreement with the Somerville Municipal Employees Union, Unit B.

Matthew Sirigu, Labor Counsel, spoke on this item, noting that it is a follow-up to the collective bargaining agreement settled last year regarding vacation time. He explained that the previous language was open to multiple interpretations, and the memorandum of agreement (MOA) clarifies that employees may carry over a maximum of three weeks of vacation from one calendar year to the next. The MOA also provides for payout of vacation time for employees with large balances and going forward, the clarified language prevents excessive accumulation of vacation time.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Link, City Councilor At Large Strezo, Ward Seven City Councilor Hardt, Ward Two City Councilor Scott and City Councilor At Large Wheeler