



# CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

## CLERK OF COMMITTEES

June 19, 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	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six City Councilor	Present	
Mark Niedergang	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	City Councilor At Large	Present	

The meeting was held in the Council Chamber and was called to order by Chairman White at 6:17 pm and adjourned at 10:39 pm.

Councilor Clingan was attending a neighborhood meeting for the Star Market lot so was not in attendance at the start of the meeting.

Others present: Annie Connor - Legislative Liaison; Doug Kress - HHS; Cindy Hickey - Council on Aging; Anna Fox Doherty - SomerPromise; Cathy Piantigini - Libraries; Frank Wright - Law; Mary Skipper - School; Jill Lathan - Parks & Recreation; Ed Bean - Finance; Rich Raiche - Engineering; Alex Lessin - Water & Sewer; Michael Mastrobuoni - SomerStat; John DeLuca - Water & Sewer; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees

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

Mr. Mastrobuoni updated the Council on the handouts uploaded at [www.somervillema.gov/fy20budget](http://www.somervillema.gov/fy20budget).

### **Health and Human Services**

Mr. Kress noted that the list of state mandated responsibilities for health and human services has ballooned in recent years. HHS focuses on prevention and education for addiction. It will continue to expand equity training and mental health needs. The increase in the budget is largely due to an Environmental Health Coordinator position. The position of Nurse Navigator is grant-funded and will work with students.

Councilor Hirsch asked about coordination and how more can be done with location, software etc. to facilitate this and ensuring that following up is a priority. The department is working on a single point of entry system for better tracking, and also will continue to work to coordinate with other entities. Councilors Mbah and McLaughlin expressed concern about the focus on prevention but not treatment, and would like to see a combination of both. The Substance Use Prevention Coordinator position is not a nurse, but will focus on the school population and working with at-risk students. It will be funded through the Medical Marijuana Stabilization Fund. Councilor McLaughlin emphasized that Somerville is doing a great job of prevention but the treatment aspect is still an issue that may require re-allocation of resources. President Ballantyne asked for elaboration on the Farmer's Market, as it remains under the radar. Councilor Rossetti suggested that additional grant funding could be applied for and wondered whether it could supplant some of the general fund expenditures, though often the grants come with restrictions. Councilor Niedergang asked about the progress on addressing "nips" and the department is working with retailers as well as with Inspectional Services to address the litter. Councilor Rossetti asked about the impact of the collective bargaining agreement, and Mr. Mastrobuoni noted that the transfer from Salary Contingency would probably be from FY20.

### **Council on Aging**

Ms. Hickey shared that the City has committed to become a dementia-friendly city. The department plans to create another memory cafe focused on music. It also aims to be a "one-stop shop" for services.

### **SomerPromise**

Ms. Doherty noted that the department is focused on additional support for Portuguese speaking students, who have been increasing in number and needs, and continuing to support wraparound services and focus on out of school time and early childhood.

Councilor Hirsch asked how to address the missed opportunities to ensure that all children are included in programming and how to maintain consistency across divisions to eliminate barriers. Ms. Doherty noted that there are several new staff and it is a work in progress. Councilor Mbah asked for data around participation in out of school programs by demographics. President Ballantyne also noted a concern about gender disparities in funding for athletics programming. The Wraparound Coordinator is working to engage girls at the high school level to assess and provide additional services, though not specifically athletics. Councilor Rossetti recalled the vision when the department was created was to focus on fundraising and grants, but there is no mention of grants received and none outlined in the goals. Ms. Doherty noted that the grants are through the School Department, including some received from the Commonwealth as well as other entities. Councilor Rossetti asked for a memo outlining these and the amounts. Councilor Scott shared that he was pleased to see the additional investment in this department.

### **Veterans' Services**

Mr. Bishop was unavailable this evening, but will be presenting the Veterans' Services budget to the Council on June 25th.

### **Libraries**

Ms. Piantigini shared that upgrades to the West Branch will improve accessibility and ability to

utilize space. She thanked those who are providing temporary space while construction is underway. A focus for 2020 will be providing more technology access and a "library of things". Councilor Davis emphasized support for continued improvement and upgrading of the library system. He noted that expanding the chromebook inventory and programming will be helpful to fill the gap for students who do not have access at home. Councilor Mbah also praised the libraries and suggested a focus on programming outside of weekday morning hours that working parents could enjoy with their children. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked for an update on the Health Services Coordinator, which was a pilot program two fiscal years ago that was funded through state library aid. Most of the challenges stemmed from physical space, including lack of privacy and trying to reach three libraries with one part-time position. The path forward will be in partnering with the Health and Human Services Department, and will include programming such as naloxone training. Councilor Hirsch noted that the budget for the Libraries is growing at a slower rate than other City departments, and other communities are spending more per capita and she would support more investment in the departments such as this, which are the heart of the community. Chairman White asked about the reduction in ESL classes and participants, and some is attributed to the closing of the West Branch, and some of the decrease is due to a correction in how classes were formerly counted. President Ballantyne asked about the two vacancies, and one has been filled and the other is the Branch Manager for the West Branch, which is on hold during the reconstruction project.

## **Parks & Recreation**

Ms. Lathan shared that the department has seen an increase in female participants in the basketball and intramural programs and has also taken over the management of the Kennedy Pool and the Sunsetter program.

Councilor Hirsch shared that we spend less per capita than surrounding communities, which also have strong non-profits that play a role in recreation. She would like to see more communication and consistency to support families in making it possible for children to attend programs. She asked about the status of an Aquatics Director and noted that it would be helpful to have hours that children or teens can use the pool facilities without requiring an adult accompanying them. There is a larger needs analysis underway before moving forward with an Aquatics Director position. She also wondered about the positions available for students with disabilities or behavioral needs through the Summer Jobs program and there are some available now and the Kennedy Pool will be adding some other options. The pool will also be adding more programming once staffing levels are increased. Councilor Niedergang asked about moving the Parks & Recreation Department to the Edgerly School and Ms. Lathan shared that moving the department is still part of the plan, but the process may be delayed due to the needs of the High School. Councilors Mbah and Hirsch asked that the department work on better communication to encourage students to attend events and facilitate the logistics to enable them to do so. Councilor McLaughlin praised the improvements in this department and noted how far they have come during his tenure. Councilor Clingan also recognized the increased accessibility and affordability of the department's programs. Councilor Niedergang asked about the Program Developer position and how it compares to the Program Coordinator. The Program Developer is a union position, which was created prior to Ms. Lathan's tenure. Councilor Scott asked about prior year's funds that were liquidated, and Ms. Lathan and Mr. Mastrobuoni will research. President Ballantyne asked about the Buildings & Grounds line, and it is for Boat House needs, bathrooms, painting, flooring and general office needs. Ms. Lathan will provide a breakdown of the plans for

the upcoming year of this as well as Athletic Supplies and Uniforms.

### **Field Maintenance**

The foreman and laborer positions have been posted with the goal of hiring by mid-August. Councilor Davis clarified that this department will be responsible primarily for playing fields, but may also share some expertise with OSPCD as it relates to soil and other issues for other fields in the city. Councilor Scott commended the results of the prior Operations Director. He further clarified that the responsibilities include any field that a permitted league plays on. He also asked about the significant remaining funds for care of fields, and it was due partly to lack of staff and partly due to weather. Councilor Scott noted consistent under-spending and the plan will focus on the hiring of new staff to execute maintenance. Chairman White asked about the contracts and Ms. Lathan confirmed that the contractors would have done more work if weather allowed. Aeration and fertilization will continue to be contracted services. President Ballantyne asked about the seeding of the Lincoln Park field, which is being managed by OSPCD, but Ms. Lathan shared that the irrigation is complex and the grass is thinner than anticipated, and there are some grading issues. President Ballantyne asked for a breakdown of portable toilets at the various athletic fields.

### **Dilboy Field**

This enterprise fund is fully staffed and has been very consistent. Councilor Niedergang asked about the electricity issues and Ms. Lathan is not certain of the specific reasons that it remains high. No lights have been changed at the facility.

### **Veteran's Memorial & Founder's Ice Rinks**

The increase in minimum wage has affected the salaries, and the department will also be replacing mats. Councilor Niedergang expressed concern about the City's subsidization of the rinks, and some of the rentals may increase, as the department encourages community groups to use the facilities. Councilor Davis added that it is a great civic use as a space for residents to congregate in the winter and the free public skating is a great service for all families. Chairman White noted that the interest payments on the debt are included in the costs, and barring those, the rinks are effectively self-sustaining. President Ballantyne requested data about the use of the rinks and Councilor Davis emphasized that there is likely not data for public skating, but this is one of the most valuable uses of the rinks. Councilor Hirsch suggested more thought about how to provide transportation or other systems to encourage students to use these facilities.

### **Kennedy School Pool**

There has been a significant amount of work completed since the department began maintaining the facility and there is more work planned. A continual maintenance contract will also help ensure appropriate upkeep to avoid major costs in the future. Chairman White asked whether the subsidization from the general fund would be expected to continue, and it will go down once many of the major repairs are completed. He also clarified that the fees may change once the department has some history of utilization.

## **Sewer**

Mr. DeLuca shared that the personnel increase includes six (6) new employees for the department, as well as renegotiated SMEA B contracts.

Chairman White clarified that all of the new positions are for the entire fiscal year. He asked further how much of retained earning would remain, given the FY20 revenue and expenditure assumptions, and it would be \$556,000. The Capital Stabilization Fund would also include approximately \$12M. Councilor Scott clarified that the revenue includes the modified increase recently passed. He confirmed that there are funds in the Professional & Technical Services line that were carried forward from FY18 and still have not been spent. Chairman White clarified that this line includes management of capital projects and a rate study. Any funds that are liquidated will be included in retained earnings. Councilor Scott and Chairman White asked for elaboration on why over \$1M was allocated for maintenance, with just over \$300,000 spent, on a system that the department notes has failing infrastructure. Councilor Scott expressed concern about the operations of the department and Chairman White cautioned that keeping up with ordinary maintenance is critical to decreasing major capital expenses in the future. Mr. DeLuca shared that there was a lack of personnel, as well as difficulty in properly planning. Mr. Raiche added that many of these projects are being moved for FY20 into the Capital Outlay, to allow for greater ability to bridge fiscal years.

## **Water**

Mr. DeLuca shared that the personnel increase includes six (6) new employees for the department, as well as renegotiated SMEA B contracts.

Chairman White noted that retained earnings were utilized for FY19 and confirmed that \$660,000 will be shifted to the Capital Stabilization fund, which will leave \$590,000 in retained earnings for water. The Capital Stabilization fund is allocated at 32% for water and 68% for sewer. Councilor Scott asked about the line for Repairs - Tools & Equipment and the funds were needed for repairs to water meters. President Ballantyne clarified that residents are charged for new meters, but residents are only charged if they are responsible for the damage.

### **204888: That the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Director of Finance report to this Board how much money was spent per year on girls' programs and boys' programs during FY16, FY17 and FY18 to date.**

President Ballantyne is still awaiting this data for FY16 and FY17 (and FY19 if available).

**RESULT:**

**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

### **205109: That the Administration and Director of Parks and Recreation develop a financial policy for programming for persons under 18 years of age that ensures gender equity when using public funds.**

Ms. Lathan shared that a draft policy was submitted that aims to address equity of opportunity, though this does not necessarily correlate to financial resources. The department has partnered with the schools on some programming as well, and further focuses on addressing gender equity in hiring and workforce development. President Ballantyne noted that she would still like to see a more global plan for allocating the financial resources more equitably.

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**

**206827: Director of Parks & Recreation responding to #205109 re: a policy for gender equity for programs serving persons under 18.**

**RESULT:**

**WORK COMPLETED**