



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

6:00 PM

This meeting was held in-person and virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:09 pm by Chair Wheeler and adjourned at 7:19 pm with a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Link, Strezo, Hardt, Scott and Wheeler), none opposed, and none absent.

Others present: 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
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Public Hearing

1. Communication By Councilor Wheeler
(ID # [26-0114](#))

Conveying that, pursuant to Section 6-2 of the City Charter, this City Council will hold a public hearing on the community's Fiscal Year 2027 budget priorities in the Committee on Finance on February 10, 2026.

Chair Wheeler opened the public hearing at 6:14 pm. He noted that this is a year in which the federal government is providing less funding and the economy is slowing, requiring the City to reduce its budget by approximately \$5 million. He stated that the purpose of the hearing was to listen to and better understand the community's priorities. Chair Wheeler noted that he would recuse himself if any residents wished to speak on matters involving the Department of Racial and Social Justice or the Youth League, due to a family member's employment there.

Twenty-four residents spoke on numerous budget priorities and concerns for FY26. Thirteen residents spoke in support of transportation and roadway safety improvements, including improved intersection safety, such as added crosswalks, traffic signals, and enhanced lighting, as well as HAWK beacons and roadway paving. Residents referenced specific locations, including Highland Avenue, which was noted as being in poor condition due to snow; North Street, where a three-mile stretch lacks a crosswalk; the Gilman Square area near the Community Path; the Park Street railroad crossing as a safety concern for cyclists; and poor road conditions around Kennedy School. Four residents spoke about bike infrastructure, with two in support and two expressing concerns about continued spending. Three residents spoke about parking availability while maintaining safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

Twelve residents spoke in support of protecting immigrant communities, including funding for the Office of Immigrant Affairs, legal services, “Know Your Rights” trainings, rental and food assistance, and policies limiting cooperation with federal immigration enforcement. Eleven residents spoke in support of continued and expanded investment in affordable housing, including the Office of Housing Stability, the municipal voucher program, guaranteed basic income, legal services, and efforts to create permanently affordable housing. Seven residents spoke in support of implementing the recommendations of the Massachusetts Special Commission on Combating Antisemitism and described incidents of antisemitic vandalism and harassment in the community.

Six residents spoke in support of youth programming, childcare, preschool stability, and expanded recreation access for teens. Five residents spoke in support of a non-police emergency response model and raised concerns about overreliance on traditional policing, while four residents spoke in support of increasing funding for police and fire recruitment or strengthening traditional public safety staffing. Three residents spoke against increasing police overtime or expanding policing in certain contexts. Four residents spoke in support of arts and cultural funding or improved use of City-owned assets for creative space, three residents spoke in support of expanded composting programs, and three residents spoke in support of increased investment in recreation facilities, park improvements, lighting, or accessibility enhancements. Two residents spoke in support of a dog park in West Somerville, and one resident urged reinvestment in Founders Rink to address maintenance and safety issues. Two residents spoke in support of continued funding for the warming center during extreme weather events. Additional comments highlighted concerns about sewer and water meter costs, support for smart trash containers to reduce rodent activity, appreciation for DPW snow removal efforts, and requests for clearer guidance on how to submit public comments.

Chair Wheeler encouraged residents to submit additional comments by email to publiccomments@somervillema.gov. Councilor J.T. Scott expressed appreciation for the interpreters and staff who supported the public hearing, and Chair Wheeler echoed his thanks to City staff in attendance. Chair Wheeler closed the public hearing at 7:17 pm.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK
COMPLETED**