City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 7, 2023 **6:00 PM**

Others present: Karin Carroll – Director of Health and Human Services, David Goodridge – Chief Information Officer, Assistant Chief Chris Major – SFD, Richelle Embree – Public Safety Director of Administration and Finance, Aneesh Sahni – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison, Neha Singh - Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 7:36 PM on a roll call vote of 5 in favor (Councilors Pineda Neufeld, Clingan, Kelly, Scott and Wilson), none against and none absent.

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Roll Call

Present:	Chairperson Jake Wilson, Vice Chair Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Charlotte Kelly, Jesse Clingan and Judy Pineda Neufeld

1. Committee Minutes (ID # **23-0160**)

Approval of the Finance Committee Minutes of January 24, 2023.

RESULT:	**ACCEPTED**

Grant Acceptances

2. Mayor's Request (ID # **23-0109**)

Requesting approval to accept and expend a $91,211.79 grant with no new match required, from MA Executive Office of Public Safety to the Fire Department for staffing costs.

Director Embree stated that these funds will be used to defray the cost of overtime in the Fire Department. Councilor Kelly asked if it's anticipated that overtime hours will be going down this year and Assistant Chief Major indicated that he would expect that it should since many positions have recently been filled. Councilor Scott asked how many overtime shifts there were this fiscal year vs. last fiscal year and Assistant Chief Major said that he would provide that data. Councilor Scott commented that he wants to explore ways to manage overtime costs.

RESULT:	**RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE:	Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Prior Year Invoices

3. Mayor's Request (ID # **23-0096**)

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling $6,318.46 using available funds in the Information Technology Computer Supplies Account for computer supplies, internet services, and phone services.

CIO Goodridge explained that some of these invoices were received after the purchase orders were closed or were charged to the incorrect purchase order. There was also one charge from 2019 for which an invoice was never received.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Funds and Accounts

4. Mayor's Request (ID # **23-0125**)

Requesting approval to create the Opioid Recovery and Remediation Stabilization Fund.

Director Carroll said nation-wide, the opioid settlement fund recovered $26 billion from 3 opioid distributors as a result of misconduct and vast over-dispensing of the drugs. Massachusetts will receive $525 million from that fund to be allocated to cities and towns for use in three specific areas; 1) to incorporate community input from those directly affected, 2) to address service disparities in harm reduction, and 3) to leverage existing disorders programming and services. Director Carroll said that preliminary conversations have been held with other communities and Somerville would partner with some regional providers to address the overall problem. The state is encouraging cities and towns to work regionally and to think creatively.

The funds will be managed by the city's Department of Health and Human Services.

Chair Wilson asked if these funds could be used for a safe consumption site and Director Carroll said that the parameters are broad, so probably yes. Councilor Clingan asked about the state's allocation of the funds and Director Carroll wasn't sure of the exact formula being used, but she thinks it's based on population. She will get the information and provide an answer. She noted that this stabilization fund is separate from the Marijuana Host Stabilization Fund (MHSF). Councilor Kelly asked how the MHSF interacts with this new fund and inquired where funds for a safe consumption site will come from. Director Carroll replied that $500,000 from the MHSF was set aside for that purpose. She informed members that there will be an update on the search for possible consumption site locations at next week's Public Health and Public Safety Committee meeting.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Lease Agreements

5. Mayor's Request (ID # **22-2041**)

Requesting approval of the Alternative Transportation Corridor Lease Agreement with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA).

See attached memo.
The City and the MBTA attorneys and staff met last month to discuss final details on the signing of the Lease and the steps to be taken to open the Community Path to the public. The Parties expect to agree on the final lease language in time to submit to the Finance Committee for the February 21 meeting. Councilor Scott asked that the final lease be sent to members of the Finance Committee.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Contracts and Easements

6. Mayor's Request (ID # **23-0126**)

Requesting approval of a time-only contract extension for the Weston and Sampson Engineering and Licensed Site Professional contract for Conway park beyond the three year maximum, to 12/31/2023.

See attached memo.
Because of the duration and complexity of the Conway Park remediation and renovation project, the project team was unable to complete the regulatory requirements before the expiration of the contract.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

7. Mayor's Request (ID # **23-0121**)

Requesting approval of a time-only contract extension for CBA Landscape Architects, for the Henry Hansen Memorial Park design services beyond the three year maximum, to 9/30/2024.

See attached memo.
Henry Hansen Memorial Park was put on hold during the Covid -19 pandemic and requires an extension of the current contract to allow the City to meet the deadline of the $375,224 PARC grant award and complete the project. Councilor Kelly asked Liaison Carrillo if ground has broken on this project yet and to provide a timeline for completion of the project.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

8. Mayor's Request (ID # **23-0119**)

Requesting approval of a time-only extension to the contract with Barletta Heavy Division, for work on the Somerville Avenue Utilities and Streetscape Improvements project.

See attached memo.
This project has encountered several delays and the cumulative effect of the schedule impacts has extended the total duration of the City's contract with Barletta Heavy Division, the contractor responsible for the work, beyond three years. This request is for a contract extension of 15 months to a new end date of June 30, 2024. The city is actively negotiating the price impacts associated with the delays and additional work, and will bring a future request to the Council for a project appropriation adjustment once those negotiations are complete.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

9. Mayor's Request (ID # **23-0058**)

Requesting approval to extend the Invoice Cloud contract for credit card processing for over-the-counter and meter transactions.

See attached memo.
A new vendor needs to be selected, and more time is needed to research the respondent to ensure they can perform the requirements in the RFP. There was only one respondent so the Parking Department needs the additional time to ensure they could take on the account requirements before awarding the contract.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: Chairperson Wilson, Vice Chair Scott, City Councilor At Large Kelly, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld

Financing

10. Mayor's Request (ID # **23-0110**)

Requesting approval of the Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) Zone, Plan, and Form of Agreement for Winter Hill.

Chair Wilson reported that the permitting for the project is in place and the next question will be subsidization of project. City staff is finalizing the details and the information will be sent out tomorrow and Liaison Carrillo asked members to contact staff with any questions after reading the information. The Finance Committee will hold a Public Hearing on this

item at its February 21st meeting.
The developer has to close with the land owner next month and in order to secure the financing to close on the property, this needs to be approved by a certain date. Councilor Scott commented that he understands the pressure the developer is under and he asked if the documents being provided tomorrow will contain all the details of the TIF, so as not to delay this. Councilor Clingan stated that he was hoping for a more in depth discussion tonight, adding that he's not comfortable about this since he doesn't know who's "driving the car'. He said it feels like having a gun to the council's head since he doesn't know what's been agreed to yet and he wants to make sure the public has all the information before going forward. Chair Wilson said that he has several questions, e.g., have the developers opened their books?, how is an acceptable profit margin determined? is there an upper monetary boundary for the project? will rental rates be capped? does the council have any role in the negotiations? how would the covenant compliance be monitored? Chair Wilson would like to see a side by side comparison of the tax revenue produced by the vacant vs. the developed project.
Councilor Kelly wants to know what ability the city has to hold the developer accountable and she wonders how public hearing feedback can be considered in the short window of time.
Liaison Carrillo said the administration would be coming back once the project's hard numbers are ready, maybe in 18 months time. Councilor Scott noted that approval of this item yields benefit to the developer by providing tax reduction over a number of years. He wants an agreement that will allow enforcement of a yet to be made agreement. Chair Wilson commented that if this is done right, it would be the city putting its money where its mouth is on affordable housing.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Orders

11. Order (ID # **23-0137**)

By Councilor Clingan, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Kelly and Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the Director of Communications provide this Council with an accounting of how the cable franchise fees have been expended over the past five years.

See attached memo.
Staff will be on-hand at next week's Public Utilities and Public Works Committee meeting. Councilor Clingan would like a detailed report of how the franchise fees were spent, saying that the memo received wasn't what he was looking for. He suggested marking this item as work completed, however, Councilor Scott prefers to leave the item in committee for further discussion with city staff at the next meeting.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

12. Order (ID # 22-1517)

By Councilor Kelly, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Finance and the Budget Director update this Council on the progress of the free cash certification and any anticipated plans for additional free cash use.

Chair Wilson reported that free cash has been certified and the details will be shared at the March 7th Finance Committee meeting. Liaison Carrillo informed the members that the free cash amount is just under $39 million. Councilor Kelly said there seems to be no excuse to nickel and dime anything and she hopes that the administration reviews notes from the council's budget priority process. Councilor Scott noted that the previous free cash certification was about $23-25 million. He said that one source of free cash is over budgeting and that puts the lie up front that the cupboard is bare, making people question why the city won't spend money on some requested items.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Communications and Discussions

13. Mayor's Communication (ID # 23-0159)

Conveying updates to the FY 2023 City Council budget requests and requesting budget priorities for FY 2024.

Chair Wilson welcomes the administration's willingness to accept input from the council. Councilor Kelly spoke about several areas of the memo and asked about the public listening session and where residents can sign up. Liaison Carrillo will provide that information. Councilor Scott mentioned that the council had been told that an immediate compensation study would be done and he asked for its status. Liaison Carrillo didn't have an answer but she will get an update and report back, at which point Councilor Scott stated that the study hasn't begun. He asked the Chair about the committee's budget process plans and Chair Wilson said that he has some preliminary meetings to discuss ways to make the process easier this year and he will provide updates on the process as it develops. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked when the mid-year finance report will be provided and Liaison Carrillo replied that it will be ready for the March 7th Finance Committee meeting. Councilor Pineda Neufeld spoke about community meetings happening before budget season and asked if people attending those meetings could provide their own input on the budget.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Referenced Documents:
Finance - 2023-2-7 C# 180270 Barletta Heavy Division Inc (with 23-0119)
Finance - 2023-2-7 Time extnsion Conway and Hanson 2023 (with 23-0121, 23-0126)
Finance - 2023-2-7 Memo to Finance Committee-Lease Status 2.7.23 FNL (with 22-2041)
Finance - 2023-2-7 FC SAUSI Time Extension 2023Feb03 (with 23-0119)
Finance - 2023-2-27 Request to extend Invoice Cloud (with 23-0058)
Finance - 2023-2-7 Cable Franchise Fee Allocation Memo to Finance Committee w Attachments (with 23-0137)