



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL
JAKE WILSON
CITY COUNCILOR AT LARGE

March 25, 2025

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne
City of Somerville
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143

Re: FY 2026 Budget Priorities

Dear Honorable Mayor Ballantyne:

Thank you for requesting budget priorities from the Somerville City Council once again this year as part of the Fiscal Year 2026 budget process. I'm deeply appreciative of your administration's willingness to engage with the council on this, and I welcome the opportunity to collaborate by sharing my budget priorities as an individual councilor.

FY 2026 will be another budget cycle of limited revenue growth, with much of that additional budget capacity already being effectively earmarked to our schools, health insurance costs, debt service, pension funding, and salary contingency. So I'd like to highlight the following budget priorities that I feel are particularly deserving of new or additional funding as you and your team prepare the proposed FY 2026 budget. I would urge you to consider the following areas for new or increased funding:

- Funding to accelerate the timeline for new school construction that currently has the new building opening in December 2031
- Funding for a camera traffic enforcement pilot project to make our streets safer for all users
- Funding to create an alternative emergency response program as supported by the vast majority of the community
- Funding to create a supportive housing task force and hire a consultant to bring more supportive housing to Somerville
- Additional funding for an expanded rodent public information campaign in order to educate residents and businesses on our shared responsibility to not give rodents the food, water, and shelter they require to thrive
- Additional funding for code enforcement for trash violations to deny rodents the food, water, and shelter they require to thrive
- Funding to re-establish the school composting program to reduce food waste

in our trash

- Additional funding for Engineering to increase street resurfacing capacity beyond the current rate
- Additional funding for the design and construction of sidewalk bumpouts around problem tree roots obstructing sidewalks to achieve ADA compliance
- Additional funding for out-of-school time programming to meet demand from working families
- Funding for a community center master plan to ensure the community's usage needs are met and duplicative efforts are avoided
- Additional funding for labor required to put down and take up a modular multi-purpose floor for Founders Rink, and store it over the winter
- Funding for regular community cleanups, ideally in partnership with a community sponsor
- Funding to purchase a new public address system and microphone for the Council on Aging
- Funding for cost-of-living increases for elected compensation to address a decade of effective pay cuts due to no increases to account for inflation

Thank you for your attention to this memo and your consideration of these areas as you go about putting together the proposed FY 2026 budget. I am available to discuss any of these items, should you wish.