



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Finance Committee

### Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 2, 2025

6:00 PM

#### Committee of the Whole

This meeting was held in the City Council Chamber and via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Wilson at 6:03 pm and adjourned at 7:17 pm with 11 in favor (Councilors Mbah, Pineda Neufeld, Ewen-Campen, Scott, McLaughlin, Burnley, Sait, Strezo, Clingan, Davis, Wilson), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Councilor McLaughlin joined the meeting at 6:14pm.

Others present: Madalyn Letellier - Legislative Services Manager.

#### Roll Call

**Present:** City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan, City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr., City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah, Lance L. Davis, Ben Ewen-Campen, Judy Pineda Neufeld, Kristen Strezo and Naima Sait

**Absent:** Matthew McLaughlin

1. Communication  
(ID # [25-0567](#))

By Councilor Mbah

Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.

Chair Wilson opened the meeting let all Council members know they will be going in the order of the agenda to present budget priorities. Everyone will then have a chance to speak on and speak to what items they all believe should be a priority in this year's budget.

Councilor Mbah read from his submitted memo about his seven budget priorities including funding for schools' renovation and capitol planning, continued assistance for affordable housing development, housing stability, permanent supportive housing, composting, and de-carbonization of city buildings. All Councilors agreed on the comprehensive list of priorities.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld highlighted a few priorities that differentiate from Councilor Mbah's. Mainly the concern around ARPA funded positions and how the city sets up funding for when the city goes off the funding but also the various community partners that utilize the funding. Councilor Pineda Neufeld emphasized the need for funding for positions within Housing Stability and Immigrant Services, especially funding that trains staff on how

to access the resources around language justice. Lastly, Councilor Pineda Neufeld echoed Councilor Mbah's priorities around school building maintenance and the need for a swing space in school to increase availability and accessibility. All Councilors agreed on the list of priorities.

Councilor Ewen-Campen spoke to the uncertainty happening at the federal level in the creation of his budget priorities and his priorities are pointed at "protecting the core functions" of the city. He opened his statements by naming off what should continue to be protected by funding. Namely schools, housing, safe streets, access to city services (language access, translation services, and the ability to print those materials), and protecting art spaces. Councilor Strezo and Councilor Davis spoke on the increase in budgeting for SOIA and the ability to print and distribute pamphlets in multiple languages so that residents are aware of the services in the city. All Councilors agreed on the list of priorities

Councilor Davis spoke to the keys point as submitted in his memo. He emphasized the housing crisis, supportive housing available, assisting partnering agencies in the community, as mentioned earlier by Councilor Pineda Neufeld, and assistance to the small businesses in the city. He spoke to Ward 6 specific needs in his memo around the building of Davis Square. All Councilors agreed on the list of priorities.

Councilor McLaughlin spoke to the priorities in his memo are where funding already exists after the announcement of a level funding budget from the Mayor. He spoke through funding priorities for opioid settlements, I-93 barriers, 165 Broadway (which would require funding), development of a HEPA air filtration system, and the installation of a Portland Loo installed in East Somerville. In addition to his memo he spoke to Community Benefits funding that he would like to see added to Union Square Main Streets and the finalization of Charter Reform. Councilor Davis spoke on the request for an overdose prevention center and the many ways the center can provide a positive impact to the community and expressed his full support as a budget priority. Councilor Burnley expressed his support for the Portland Loo in East Somerville. Councilor Mbah expressed support for the sound barrier priority. All Councilors agreed on the list of priorities.

Councilor Burnley opened his comments expressing support for Councilor Mbah's priority on supportive housing. He then moved into his own priorities, submitted via memo, the first being a request of 7% to the Somerville Public Schools overall funding, another item that was in other

Councilor's priorities being the creation of a composting program, he then read of many items in his submitted memo that he also submitted in last year's budget and believes are overdue. Specifically reading out the request for \$92,006.73 be allocated to Infrastructure and Asset Management for the creation of a School Building Energy Strategy and Sustainability Project Manager and the creation of a true alternative emergency response program. All Councilors agreed on the list of priorities

Councilor Sait read her budget priorities as submitted in her memo including continued funding for public education, Office of Immigrant Affairs, flexible rental assistance, legal assistance, and retaining necessary staffing hired under ARPA funding, composting, alternative emergency response program, safe streets, taxi to health program, funding to conduct a study of Somerville school building de carbonization, swing space for schools, funding for staffing and programming for a youth center, and funding to repair the Armory roof. All Councilors agreed on the comprehensive list of priorities.

Councilor Strezo spoke broadly of her submitted memo which had bucketed information including funding for affordable housing, housing stability, safe streets, climate focused solutions specifically calling out the Cigarette Voting Box program, equity through musical broadband, rodent mitigation strategy, parent and happiness survey, staffing and support for City Councilors and a stipend for Councilors to purchase meeting space memberships or the availability for office space, pilot an older adult property tax work off, and continued support for the purchase of an emergency contraception vending machine. Each bucket included specific requests for funding and can be viewed online. Councilor Davis spoke to the opportunity to do more with murals for safe streets. All Councilors agreed on the list of priorities

Councilor Clingan put in one budget request to increase funding to the city's payment program to increase the percentage of streets being repaved. All Councilors agreed on budget priority submitted.

Councilor Scott emphasized his desire to see the administration prepare a realistic budget and instead of submitting a lengthy memo he is focusing his requests on three main goals. Those goals being managerial changes with the money the city already has, incremental expense increases, and strategic expansion of the city's investment in built capacity. He emphasized the desire to decrease the use of contracting and consulting services and hire

more employees while identifying areas where internal employees can do the task to save costs. On built capacity Councilor Scott emphasized his desire for the budget to focus on the future and where money is spent now will dictate what the city is able to achieve in years to come. Specifically, the creation of permanent supportive housing, additional staff capacity to enforce the vacant properties ordinance, and the need to create an unarmed emergency response unit outside of the Police Department. Lastly, he emphasized Councilor McLaughlin’s request for the installation of a Portland Loo in East Somerville. Councilor Burnley and Councilor McLaughlin spoke in support of the need to enforce the vacant properties ordinance and the impact enforcement would have had on the city to date and what enforcement will do for the future. All Councilors agreed on the list of priorities

Lastly, Chair Wilson delivered his budget priorities. Of the 15 he submitted in his memo, he emphasized three. The most important one being how to accelerate the timeline for the new Winter Hill school building construction. His second priority, which has been mentioned many times this meaning, is the creation of permanent supportive housing task force and the hiring of a consultant. The third, which Chair Wilson stated should pay for itself and make the streets safer, is camera traffic enforcement. Councilor Clingan echoed concerns on the timeline for the construction of the new school building. All Councilors agreed on the list of priorities.

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

- 2. Communication (ID # [25-0608](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld  
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.

This item was taken up with ID #25-0567.

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

- 3. Communication (ID # [25-0594](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen  
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.

This item was taken up with ID #25-0567.

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

4. Communication (ID # [25-0607](#)) By Councilor Davis  
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.  
This item was taken up with ID #25-0567.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
5. Communication (ID # [25-0643](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin  
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.  
This item was taken up with ID #25-0567.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
6. Communication (ID # [25-0650](#)) By Councilor Burnley Jr.  
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.  
This item was taken up with ID #25-0567.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
7. Communication (ID # [25-0640](#)) By Councilor Sait  
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.  
This item was taken up with ID #25-0567.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
8. Communication (ID # [25-0360](#)) By Councilor Strezo  
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.  
This item was taken up with ID #25-0567.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
9. Communication (ID # [25-0476](#)) By Councilor Clingan  
Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.  
This item was taken up with ID #25-0567.  
**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
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10. Communication By Councilor Wilson  
(ID # [25-0644](#)) Conveying budget priorities and requests for FY 2026.

This item was taken up with ID #25-0567.

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

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2025-04-02 Councilor Scott Budget Priorities