



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

6:00 PM

The meeting took place remotely via Zoom and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Wilson and adjourned at 7:29 PM on a roll call vote of 4 in favor (Councilors Burnley, Clingan, Scott and Wilson), none against and 1 absent (Councilor Mbah).

Others present:

Senior Accountant Alan Inacio – Planning, Director Rich Raiche - Infrastructure and Asset Management, Catherine Lester Salchert – Special Counsel, Director Emily Wisdom – SPD Finance and Administration, Yasmine Raddassi – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Jefferson Thomas (J.T.) Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Jesse Clingan and City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr.

Absent: City Councilor At Large Wilfred N. Mbah

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [25-0758](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting of April 8, 2025.

RESULT: **ACCEPTED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

Prior Year Invoices

2. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0686](#))

Requesting approval to pay prior year invoices totaling \$12,430.19 using available funds in the Police Department In Service Training, Professional & Technical Services, Repairs to Radio Alarm, and Public Safety Supplies accounts.

Director Wisdom explained that the invoices are from FY23 and FY24. The expenditures were for radio alarm work, accessories for handheld radios, training and physicals. There is also an invoice for Careworks for worker compensation adjustments.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

Grant & Gift Acceptances

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0674](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$35,300 grant with no new match required, from the Boston Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department for upgrades to the Emergency Operation Center.

Director Wisdom told the committee that this UASI grant will be used for audio/video system upgrades and an improved sound control system.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.
ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

4. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0683](#)) Requesting approval to accept and expend a \$61,301.89 grant with no new match required, from the Boston Office of Emergency Management to the Police Department for replacement of cameras.

Director Wisdom said that these funds will be used to replace 11 outdated cameras and noted that the camera at the boathouse will be moved to another location because the Police Department no longer has the UASI funded boat there and because that particular camera had to be used to monitor UASI funded assets. Councilor Burnley asked if the removed camera was in same place as the SFD's camera and the Director said that she thinks they were separate but she will check with the SFD to be sure. Councilor Burnley noted that he may put forward an item requesting that additional information be provided with items in order to get a better picture of funding requests. Chair Wilson asked if Surveillance Technology Impact Reports were needed for these cameras and Director Wisdom said new reports are not needed as they are replacements for existing cameras.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.
ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

Contracts & Easements

5. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0523](#)) Requesting approval of a Deed, Maintenance License, and Maintenance Easement for 808 Windsor Street.

Special Counsel Catherine Lester Salchert explained this is for the civic space being deeded to city. Boynton Yards wants the owner's association, presently comprised of the owners of 101 South Street and 808 Windsor

Street, to perform the transfer. Councilor Scott reviewed the documents and highlighted that this is land coming to the city because of the hard work of the Union Square Neighborhood Council and other advocates and Councilor Burnley noted that this agreement would make the space public. The Special Counsel explained that the Boynton Yards Owners Association will be responsible for all maintenance and must notify the city of any changes to be made to the property. There’s also a storm drainage easement that will be maintained by the developer, who will have to ensure that the public has access to the open space, to the extent possible, while work is being performed.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

- 6. Officer's Communication (ID # [25-0824](#))

City Solicitor requesting approval to retain Verrill Dana, LLP, as outside legal counsel with respect to Combined Sewer Overflow Control matters.

Special Counsel Catherine Lester Salchert informed the committee that this item was submitted to help the city update its long-term control plan. Director Raiche explained that the EPA and DEP are issuing a discharge plan for the Deer Island Treatment Plant and that the city is retaining counsel to ensure that it does what it needs to do, as the city will be required to undertake some costly upgrades to its sewer system and needs legal guidance. Councilor Burnley asked if this has anything to do with complaints about Alewife Brook and Director Raiche said it’s part of the same technical issue.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

Funds & Accounts

- 7. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0524](#))

Requesting approval to create the Chestnut Street Multimodal Safety Stabilization Fund and accept a payment of \$99,127 from the developer of 100 Chestnut Street to implement multimodal safety and access improvements.

Mr. Inacio explained that this is a mitigation payment from the developer, as conditioned by the Planning Board. Councilor Clingan asked about any stipulations for using the funds and Mr. Inacio replied that there are no

restrictions other than the funds must be used to satisfy the conditions set by the Planning Board. The funds will be put into a stabilization fund until needed, at which time the City Council will be asked for an authorization to expend them. Mr. Inacio stated that it makes more sense for the city to collect the funds and perform any work itself.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

Transfers

8. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0398](#)) Requesting the transfer of \$55,631 from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Undesignated Fund Balance to the CPA Open Space Reserve.

This item was discussed with Item # 25-0399.

Mr. Inacio explained that this request is to make the appropriation which will be used to fulfil the request in Item # 25-0399 (below). Chair Wilson inquired about the timeline for completing the project and Mr. Inacio replied that the city is still aiming for a fall completion. Councilor Burnley asked why one member of the Community Preservation Committee abstained from voting on this matter and Mr. Inacio said he'll try to get more detailed information.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

Appropriations

9. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0652](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$300,000 from the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Fund to the CPA Open Space Land Acquisition Fund.

Mr. Inacio commented that this yearly transfer of funds to the Open Space Land Acquisition Fund (OSLAF) might have inadvertently slipped through the cracks. He informed the committee that the current balance in the OSLAF is \$800,000.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

10. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0399](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$100,000 from the Community Preservation Act Budgeted Reserve and Open Space Reserve for improvements to Dilbooy Auxiliary Fields.

This item was discussed with Item # 25-0398.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

11. Mayor's Request (ID # [25-0651](#)) Requesting the appropriation of \$1,468,693 from the Community Preservation Act Affordable Housing Reserve to the Affordable Housing Trust.

Mr. Inacio explained that there was a clerical error of \$12,000 in the original request already approved by the City Council and that this item will replace the original request. No action is needed from the City Council to discard the previous request.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**

AYE: City Councilor At Large Wilson, Ward Two City Councilor Scott, Ward Four City Councilor Clingan and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

ABSENT: City Councilor At Large Mbah

Orders and Resolutions

12. Order (ID # [25-0254](#)) By Councilor Burnley Jr.
That the Chief of Police present to this Council the financial implications of the Public Safety for All recommendations, specifically the costs to fund additional officers, acquire and utilize body cameras, and implement a co-response model.

Liaison Raddassi told the committee that more than 70 recommendations were made and that the city is in the process of finding a project manager to determine the scope of work and funding that will be needed. Candidates have been screened and interviews are currently underway. Councilor Burnley commented that he had disagreed with much of the report and he asked about the financial implications. Liaison Raddassi stated that she believes that the position was funded in the FY25 budget, however Chair Wilson stated that he does not see it in that budget.

Liaison Raddassi said that the administration will come to the City Council for allocations based on which recommendations are implemented. Councilor Burnley spoke about body cams, saying that at the time, the City Council would not move forward until policy changes were in place and that

he doesn't remember any significant changes being made, so it doesn't make sense to implement some of the recommendations that were previously rejected. He noted that the cost to the city includes a stipend for police officers who use body cams and he wants to know if that cost has changed.

Councilor Burnley commented that he doesn't know why this position is being created and filled without having been funded and Councilor Scott said this sounds like a mid-term hiring process. Liaison Raddassi said that she checked on the funding during this discussion and reported that the position was funded through the RSJ Department and passed on the final night of the FY25 budget process.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

13. Order
(ID # [25-0568](#))

By Councilor Mbah

That the Director of Housing include a line item contribution to the Affordable Housing Trust's FY 2026 ordinary maintenance budget in order to sustain its funding for affordable housing development and assistance to households facing rent or mortgage arrears.

A staff memo has been submitted regarding this item and is referenced below.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

14. Order
(ID # [25-0569](#))

By Councilor Mbah

That the Director of Housing Stability calculate and present a budget proposal for sufficient funding that will enable it to continue its programs of municipal flex funding, legal assistance and related housing search services for residents facing displacement and homeless families and individuals in FY 2026.

This item was discussed with Item # 25-0570.

A staff memo has been submitted regarding this item and is referenced below.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

15. Order
(ID # [25-0570](#))

By Councilor Mbah

That the Director of the Office of Sustainability and Environment clarify the situation regarding the federal grant application for composting and, depending on its likely fulfillment, calculate a budget line item to insure that the small-scale pilot program can continue into FY 2026 and expand to more households.

This item was discussed with Item # 25-0569.

A staff memo has been submitted regarding this item and is referenced below.

Liaison Raddassi reported that OSE is working on a memo and hopes to

share more information about the program soon.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

16. Order
(ID # [25-0745](#))

By Councilor Wilson and Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Chief Assessor and the City Treasurer discuss with this Council the issue of residents not receiving initial motor vehicle excise tax bills, resulting in demand fees.

Two staff memos have been submitted regarding this item and are referenced below.

Chair Wilson asked if it's the administration's stance that people contact the Treasury Department if a bill is not received by March 1 and Liaison Raddassi said it was and that the problem was not caused by the city, but rather by either the state or the USPS. Councilor Burnley commented that he would be happy to sponsor a resolution to the state regarding this matter and Chair Wilson commented that it seems unfair and he, too, would be happy to put pressure on the state to make the situation better.

Excerpt from the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Excise Tax Handbook: Payment of the motor vehicle excise is due 30 days from the date the excise bill is issued (not mailed, as is popularly believed). According to Chapter 60A, section 2 of the Massachusetts General Laws, "Failure to receive notice shall not affect the validity of the excise". A person who does not receive a bill is still liable for the excise plus any interest charges accrued. Therefore, it is important to keep the Registry, local assessors, and the post office informed of a current name and address so that excise bills can be delivered promptly. All owners of motor vehicles must pay an excise tax; therefore, it is the responsibility of the owner to contact the local assessor if he/she has not received a bill.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Referenced Documents:

- Finance - 2025-05-06 Memo (with 25-0568)
- Finance - 2025-05-06 Memo (with 25-0569)
- Finance - 2025-05-06 Memo (with 25-0570)
- Finance - 2025-05-06 Memo (with 25-0745)
- Finance - 2025-05-06 Motor Vehicle Excise Manual (with 25-0745)