



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

CLERK OF COMMITTEES

January 21, 2020
REPORT OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Vice Chair	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	

Others present: Annie Connor-Intergovernmental Affairs, Khushbus Webber-Mayor's Office, Ed Bean-Finance, Jill Lathan-Parks & Recreation, Suzanne Rinfret-Traffic & Parking, Mike Mastrobuoni-Somerstat, Rich Raiche-Infrastructure and Asset Management, Luisa Oliveira-OSPCD, Alan Inacio-OSPCD, Oliver Sellers-Garcia-Office of Sustainability & Environment, Hannah Pappenheim-City Solicitor's Office, Councilor Jesse Clingan, Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, Gareth Orsmond-outside counsel and several others from the community.

The meeting was held in the Committee Room and was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Chairperson Scott and adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

1. Approval of the December 3, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
----------------	-----------------

Information Requests

209545: That the Directors of Finance, SomerStat and the Budget provide a comprehensive updated Capital Improvement Plan for all projects scheduled to come before this Council for funding by the end of FY20 and projected 5 years out.

Mr. Bean sent the General Fund 2019 information to the committee. There were discussions about big ticket projects such as: Conway Park, Dilboy improvements, Art Farm, and Healey playground. It was stated there are two capital plans, Water and Sewer CIP and the General CIP. The report shows what the city is projecting as priorities through 2029. The Water and Sewer CIP is being evaluated and will be updated before the end of 2020. The document shows highlights with changes. Updated spend plan delineates city spend 2020 v 2021. The cost of the Somerville High School has not changed from the \$256M. There were discussions about various projects. Chair Scott expressed caution related to future spending, and the impact on debt projections from continuing to approve projects at the current rate on the City's 10 year projections.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

201740: Proposing an ordinance relative to a mid-fiscal year report of municipal finances, with next-fiscal year budget projections.

Mr. Bean discussed the \$19M free cash in 2020. Councilor White discussed the original intent of the ordinance was to codify a more collaborative approach to city budgeting. The Chair requested an update from the Administration to the committee in time for the next Finance Meeting on February 11th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

207665: That the City Auditor analyze the City's debt structure, including current and pending borrowing, borrowing requests that the City anticipates, and the anticipated cost of the new public safety building.

Mr. Bean answered questions about estimates and the taking of property lawsuit. There were also discussions concerning debt and 30-year bonds. The city's financial advisor assisted with long term debt for 2.5%. Mr. Bean will have the financial advisor go through each project to review for the numbers. He also distributed a document labeled High Level Aggregate Debt Service Interim General Fund CIP of January 2020 with projected revenue and projected expenditures.

Mr. Bean will also have the financial advisor come up with options regarding the high school including special legislation at the state house. Concern was expressed from several members relating to the suggestion that the SHS debt exclusion bonds could be accelerated to begin impacting taxpayers earlier than projected. The chair continued to state the financial costs concerns for local tax payers. A spirited and in-depth discussion of projected debt service as a percentage of revenues.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

Contract Requests

209403: Requesting approval to extend the contract with Tom Irwin Advisors for another year to complete specialized training of the Parks and Recreation Department field laborers.

Ms. Lathan requested time extension only, no additional funds. It was stated the city has filled 3 field labor positions. The time extension is for the training of the crew on the field.

RESULT:

APPROVED

209432: Requesting authorization to increase the Somertime Revolving Fund to \$100,000, from \$65,000, because of increased programs.

Due to the increase in programs, the expanded revolving funds would allow expanded enrollment so more residents can participate in programs.

RESULT:

APPROVED

Transfer Requests

209314: Requesting a transfer of \$43,000 from the Engineering Salaries Account to the

Parking Professional and Technical Account to provide traffic engineering consulting services while the Traffic Engineer position remains vacant.

Mr. Raiche appeared before the committee regarding the requested funds. The funds would be used for a consultant to replace previous traffic engineer who retired. They have been unable to replace the engineer and will be using Terry Smith as a consultant until a replacement is hired. Mr. Raiche may need to come back before the committee to request additional funds until a replacement engineer is hired.

RESULT:	APPROVED
----------------	-----------------

209433: Requesting approval of a transfer of \$21,000 from the Police Holidays Account to the Animal Control Kennel Account, to cover FY20 costs.

The committee requested someone from the Somerville Police Department be present at the next finance meeting to answer questions about this request.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

209434: Requesting approval of a transfer of \$11,900 in the Police Animal Control Division, from the Personal Services Salary Account to the Kennel Account, to cover FY20 costs.

The committee requested someone from the Somerville Police Department be present at the next finance meeting to answer questions about this request. It was stated by the city solicitor's office that the claim with the kennel was settled.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

Grants With No Match Required

209317: Requesting acceptance of a \$32,000 grant with no new match required, from the MA Department of Environmental Protection for the Recycling Dividend program, under the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program.

It was stated by Mr. Sellers-Garcia that this request came in at the end of the year. The funds will be used to set up a mailer each year.

RESULT:	APPROVED
----------------	-----------------

209435: Requesting acceptance of a \$25,000 grant with no new match required, from the MA Department of Environmental Protection to the Office of Sustainability and Environment for 2 public electric vehicle charging stations.

Mr. Sellers-Garcia stated the two public charging locations are next to the ice rink on Somerville Avenue and on Grandview Boulevard.

RESULT:	APPROVED
----------------	-----------------

209436: Requesting acceptance of a \$17,797.00 grant with no new match required, from the Office of Justice Programs to the Police Department for Patrol Bicycles and related

accessories.

RESULT:	APPROVED
----------------	-----------------

Fields Bonding Requests

209014: Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$160,000 in a bond for design and improvements at Dilboy Stadium and auxiliary fields.

This item was withdrawn at the request of the Administration.

RESULT:	WITHDRAWN
----------------	------------------

209312: Requesting the appropriation of \$25,000 from Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Dilboy Field Enterprise Fund in order to fund design services for Dilboy Field improvements.

Ms. Connor, Ms. Pappenheim and Ms. Lathan discussed the contract negotiations with DCR to include capital repairs. DCR is unable to sign a contract that does not have a Termination for Convenience clause. It was stated that the Administration has reduced the scope to the bare minimum to make fields playable for the community. The city proposed capital improvement to include: replace turf field in the stadium, resurface the track in the stadium and overhaul auxiliary fields as multi-purpose rectangular and diamond fields. It was stated the work would be done over the summer to make the field usable for September activities. Additionally, it was stated that \$180,000 is needed for stadium renovations and the staff is a minimal cost with bigger costs being electricity and field maintenance.

Ms. Lathan reminded the committee that the Dilboy Stadium is a regional facility with Somerville using 60%-75% of the facility time. Usage of Dilboy Stadium has increased with the closure of Conway field. The stadium is also used for Somerville High School graduation, high school sports practices and SYSL on Saturdays from 8am-8pm.

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
----------------	---------------------------------------

209313: Requesting an appropriation of \$150,000 from Dilboy Field Enterprise Fund Retained Earnings for design services for field improvements.

Councilor Ballantyne inquired about the flooding issues. Ms. Oliveira stated that CPA approved funds will be used to redesign auxiliary field which will redesign the flood area. There were discussions about removing top layer of soil to help absorb water similar to what was done at Lincoln Park. It was stated that rehabilitation of grass is more expensive. Ms. Oliveira stated it would cost approximately \$3.9M to rehabilitate the grass field. Councilor Ballantyne would like to have a conversation with Ms. Oliveira about stormwaters before the Thursday night meeting.

RESULT:	DISCHARGED W/NO RECOMMENDATION
----------------	---------------------------------------

209483: Requesting an appropriation and authorization to borrow \$6,000,000 in a bond for the renovation of the Arthur D. Healey Schoolyard.

Ms. Oliveira explained that the cost for the Healey schoolyard would be \$6.5M with some of the funds coming from CDBG that would include testing and engineering. The proposal would include a soccer field. SHS sports would have priority up to 3pm-6pm, with 13-14 weeks a year and Saturdays for

Somerville Youth Soccer League. See attached slides from Ms. Connors on the Healey Playground. Ms. Oliveira stated the city would not totally own the land and would have an easement or MOA.

After discussion all members of the committee expressed their support for the proposal and praised the extensive community process and salutary benefits of accelerating the second phase of construction to include an artificial turf playing surface and athletic track, as well as an accessibility ramp from the nearby SHA housing.

RESULT:

APPROVED

209311: Requesting the appropriation of \$250,000 from Unreserved Fund Balance ("Free Cash") to the Conway Park Construction Special Revenue Account in order to fund Conway Park fields design services.

Ms. Oliveira stated that Conway Park has been closed for some time and they have been working with DEP/EPA. This project is a complicated site and the city is obligated to remediate the site. The city's outside counsel attended the meeting with Ms. Pappenheim who is helping to negotiate with the EPA. The \$250,000 would be used to hire an architect to design and assist with the conversation with EPA/DEP. Ms. Oliveira discussed removing the soil, repairing the retaining wall and replacing the trees after the toxic substance remediation. A presentation was sent to the city councilors last Friday which was a copy of the one presented at a public meeting on 12/16/19.

Councilor Ballantyne made two points to the committee and Ms. Oliveira. She stated that she is not happy the City is not trying to clean the site to a full depth of 36"; further that she does not want to convert natural grass to plastic grass. It was also stated that 70% of the community would prefer natural grass over plastic grass.

Councilor Rossetti noted that she had voted to approve six different artificial turf fields and is certainly not opposed to them on principle, but that in this case she felt it was more appropriate that Conway Park be restored as a natural grass field. Councilor Mbah also indicated that he supported natural grass on this park.

It was stated by Ms. Oliveira that it will take approximately 15-17 months to remediate the field. Ms. Oliveira is hoping to start the remediation this summer. The city would like the agreement to completed within the next 3 months and will submit for federal review. It was pointed out that if Conway Park is natural grass, there could only be 500 hours of usage a year.

Councilor Rossetti noted that she had forwarded information received from a constituent related to other municipalities who are achieving significantly greater play hours on their natural grass fields.

Chair Scott noted that remediating to a depth of only 18" would result in future use restrictions that would prohibit the site being used as a natural grass field at any point in the future without an entirely new and expensive remediation effort. He also noted that a full-depth remediation that considered the eventual use as a grass field does NOT preclude the City from installing an artificial turf surface at the conclusion of the remediation process if the executive still deems it fit and the legislative branch approves the funding necessary for same. As the remediation process will take significant time, and the results will be functionally permanent, he requested that the administration reconsider their proposal and return with a design funding request that envisions a full depth remediation effort to 36".

Councilor White noted that the Mayor might recall that 8 members of the City Council would need to vote in the affirmative to bond for any proposed future field construction.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

1. Debt Service Data (with 207665)

Debt Service Data (with 207665)

2. Comments - T Antonino (with 209311, 209403, 209483)

Comments - T Antonino (with 209311, 209403, 209483)

3. debt-summary-Jan. 222020 (2) (with 209311, 209483)

debt-summary-Jan. 222020 (2) (with 209311, 209483)

4. Healey School Summary Slides 1.6.2020 (with 209483)

Healey School Summary Slides 1.6.2020 (with 209483)

5. Interim Capital Projects List FY20-FY29 (with 209311, 209483)

Interim Capital Projects List FY20-FY29 (with 209311, 209483)

6. Park CIP List for Council Request_ 17 Jan 20 (with 209311, 209483)

Park CIP List for Council Request_ 17 Jan 20 (with 209311, 209483)