

**NOTICE: This is NOT the official version of the Committee Report as APPROVED by the Board of Aldermen. While reasonable efforts have been made to assure that this is the Committee Report that was presented at a meeting of the Board of Aldermen, you should check the Minutes of that meeting in order to confirm its approval, rejection or amendment. Do not rely on the accuracy of this information without first checking with the City Clerk.**

April 28, 2009

### **REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

The Committee on Finance convened on April 28, 2009, with Chairman Maryann Heuston presiding and Committee Members Aldermen Walter Pero and William White also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen William Roche, Thomas Taylor, Robert Trane and Dennis Sullivan, as well as Mayor Joseph Curtatone, School Committeemen Maureen Bastardi, Mark Niedergang, James Norton, Adam Sweeting, M. Teresa Cardoso and Mary Jo Rossetti, Superintendent of Schools Tony Pierantozzi, Administrative Assistant Jessie Baker and interested members of the public.

Chairman Heuston stated that the meeting was for informational purposes to allow the citizens of Somerville to express their concerns and she began the meeting by discussing the impact of the economy on the City of Somerville. Chairman Heuston stated that there is a lack of action at the state level to alleviate some of the financial problems and she stated that Beacon Hill is not doing its job. Mayor Curtatone addressed the forum and explained that the Administration is carefully analyzing the current economic situation and stated that the economic crisis has hit the cities and towns hard, noting that local aid has been cut drastically. Mayor Curtatone told those present that communication and cooperation are key and that there must be a transparent process. He stated that no final budget decisions have been made and the city does not want to go backwards with respect to the achievements that have been made. The Mayor discussed the city's revenue streams, state aid, health insurance, pensions, debt costs, police and fire department budgets, the library budget and education. Mayor Curtatone said that the goal is to reduce expenditures and increase revenues.

Alderman White discussed the proposed meals tax for cities and towns and the mayor stated that this matter is in committee now and that additional information would be available next week. The mayor noted that this measure might not pass in time for the FY-10 budget. Alderman White also stated that the sales tax may hurt lower income people since it is an aggressive tax as opposed to a progressive tax. Alderman Trane emphasized the fact that there are no clear answers as to what the imminent financial situation of the city would be.

Superintendent Pierantozzi stated that the Administration and the School Committee have been working as a team and he discussed the steps taken to deal with the economic issues at hand and the concerns of parents and students. Superintendent Pierantozzi also said that the School Department is trying to protect its core concepts and added that fees are not appropriate in Somerville because it would create a bifurcated system. Mr. Niedergang discussed the steps needed to create a final budget figure. Ms. Cardoso stated that the Somerville public schools are great and she is offended that parents flee Somerville after they take advantage of free early child care. Mr. Sweeting stated that there are great things in the Somerville schools.

The following members of the public spoke: Cesar Urunga, Alex Pirk, Alex Epstein, Pat Craig, Paula Woolley, Alex Feldman and Barry Rafkind.

No papers were acted on.

---

Alderman Maryann Heuston, Chairman  
Committee on Finance