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June 10, 2009

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
MEETING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Committee on Finance convened on June 10, 2009, as a Committee of the Whole with Chairman Maryann Heuston presiding and Committee Members Aldermen Bruce Desmond, Sean O'Donovan, John Connolly, William Roche, William White, Dennis Sullivan and Robert Trane also present and voting. Also present were Administrative Assistant Jessie Baker, Director of Traffic and Parking James Kotzuba, Police Chief Anthony Holloway, Officer Jack Leuchter from the Police Employees Association, City Solicitor John Gannon, Assistant City Solicitor Robert Collins, Personnel Director Richard Tranfaglia, Finance Director Edward Bean and interested members of the public.

187266 – Amending Ordinance 1-11(b) regarding parking fees:

Mr. Kotzuba presented the information that was requested at the prior committee meeting. A discussion took place regarding the idling of vehicles and Mr. Gannon informed the members that there is a state idling statute that may be enforced by the Police. Alderman Roche spoke about exceptions to this statute and Mr. Gannon will research the matter. Alderman White asked Mr. Kotzuba to define the role of the Traffic Commission and he further requested that a copy of the statute dealing with the idling of vehicles be provided to the committee. Alderman Roche questioned the ticketing for handicap parking violations on private property and Mr. Gannon told the members that he would perform a comprehensive study of this issue. Aldermen Roche, Sullivan, Connolly and O'Donovan stated that they were not in favor of increasing the fine for parking within 20 feet of an intersection because drivers often don't realize that they are in violation of this regulation. Alderman O'Donovan believes that the fine for parking meter violations should remain at \$20.00, so that local businesses are not hurt, and he feels that a \$40.00 fine for permit parking violations is too high. Mr. Kotzuba responded by saying that the city would lose a substantial amount of money if the permit parking and parking meter fines are not increased, namely, \$1.4 million, noting that 48,000 meter violations have been issued to date. Mr. Kotzuba also informed the members that the projected loss to the city would be \$170,000 if the fine for parking within 20 feet of an intersection is not increased. Alderman Desmond stated that he does not want to raise fines for offenses that are not blatant.

Alderman Heuston's motion **to raise the double parking fine to \$50.00**, was approved.

Alderman O'Donovan made a motion that the fines for permit parking and parking meter violations remain at their present amounts and not be increased. Discussion on the motion included concerns that not increasing these fines might lead to layoffs within the city. Members noted that the Traffic and Parking Department does have an equitable process for appealing tickets. Alderman O'Donovan withdrew his motion.

Alderman White cited a section of the City Charter regarding the Traffic Commission and questioned how the Board of Aldermen previously acted on a Home Rule Petition. Mr. Gannon stated that the increases are consistent with the City Charter.

Alderman Trane's motion to approve the proposed new fines, as amended, was approved.

Alderman White submitted a resolution that the Traffic Commission consider amending its regulation pertaining to overnight commercial vehicle parking to have two categories of fines: 1) vehicles with 2 axels, at \$40.00 per offense; and 2) vehicles with more than 2 axels, at \$50.00 per offense.

187582 – Agreement with Police Employees Association:

Mr. Gannon provided the information requested at the prior committee meeting and explained the history of the Quinn Bill, noting that it was adopted by the City of Somerville in 1983. Mr. Gannon reviewed the highlights of the agreement between the city and the Somerville Police Employees Association and explained the impact of each party's concessions.

Budget schedule:

Chairman Heuston distributed a draft budget meeting schedule for discussion.

The committee discussed matters before it and took action on the following 2 items:

187266: Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval of an amendment to Ordinance 1-11(b), establishing or increasing certain parking fines.

RECOMMENDATION: Should be approved as amended (Double parking fine raised to \$50.00)

VOTE: Unanimous, 8 - 0 in favor

187582: Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval to transfer \$1 from the Salary Contingency Acct. to the Police Dept. Salaries Acct. to fund the collective bargaining agreement with the Police Employees Association

RECOMMENDATION: Should be approved

VOTE: Unanimous, 8 - 0 in favor

Alderman Maryann Heuston, Chairman
Committee on Finance