

**24-045**  
**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**  
**MEETING REPORT**  
**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19, 2024 @ 6:00 P.M.**

To participate remotely outside of Zoom, please e-mail [AHurtubise@medford-ma.gov](mailto:AHurtubise@medford-ma.gov).

Attendees: Council President Isaac “Zac” Bears; Council Vice President Kit Collins; Councillor Anna Callahan; Councillor Emily Lazzaro; Councillor Matt Leming; Councillor George Scarpelli; Councillor Justin Tseng; other participants as noted in the body of this report.

President Bears called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on March 19, 2024 in the Medford City Council Chambers on the second floor of Medford City Hall, and via Zoom. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss Councillors’ budget priorities for the upcoming budget.

President Bears thanked participants for attending. He highlighted the tentative budget process going forward. He said once the Council submits budget recommendations to the Mayor, it will get a written response from the Mayor before the actual budget is released. He said we should also be getting budgets to actual soon. He said budget meetings will start in April. He said they will be mostly Wednesday Committee of the Whole Meetings. He said we may avoid a Saturday budget meeting this year.

He said that budget recommendations are grouped by category. He said that the goal of tonight’s meeting is to report something out to the Mayor regarding collective recommendations by the Council. He said he believes that last year the Council sent five recommendations to the Mayor. He said we could be similar or different this year.

Councillor Tseng thanked President Bears for his work. He said that most of the things he is asking for fall under the purview of the Health Department. He said he would like to see prevention of cuts to the Health Department.

Vice President Collins thanked President Bears. She said that there are clear avenues for consolidation of suggestions. She said avoiding cuts and maintaining level service are priorities. She said she believes that there is consensus on members’ points on category one, and maintaining level funding.

Councillor Scarpelli said he did not want to see Fire or Police Department cuts either, or cuts anywhere else. Councillor Scarpelli moved to add the other departments to the list.

Vice President Collins said Councillor Scarpelli is absolutely right. She said she listed the departments she listed because those are often the departments where cuts are proposed.

President Bears suggested adjusting the wording to say “meet the budget requests of the School Committee for Medford Public Schools, the budget requests of the Library Trustees for the Library, do not cut any ARPA funded positions.” Councillor Tseng said that the last two years, we have brought up the School Committee and the Library.

Councillor Callahan said that the Schools are the largest department in terms of funding. She said she would do some research. She said she would support changing the language to include “any grant funded position.” Councillor Scarpelli said he would agree. Councillor Scarpelli said that losing Penny Funaiolo was a huge loss. Councillor Scarpelli asked if we would still have the Department Head meetings. President Bears said he would hope so. Councillor Scarpelli said that in the past, we would get updates from the Finance Director on state funding.

President Bears said that the cherry sheet from the state is basically level-funded. He said he hopes to get documentation of the meetings in advance.

Vice President Collins said that there is substantial overlap for a clustering around the budgeted amounts for City Solicitor and Assistant City Solicitor, and also within the Elections Department. She said one of the recommendations was to raise the salaries for the Solicitor, Assistant Solicitor, and the Elections Director. Councillor Scarpelli said he would support this as a recommendation to the Mayor. He said it helps having somebody neutral as a Solicitor.

Vice President Collins moved to consolidate all of the bullet points under category one into the recommendation to maintain level service for the schools, library, board of health, prevention and outreach, and PDS Department, including all currently grant funded positions (Councillor Tseng second)—approved on a roll call vote of seven in favor and zero opposed.

Vice President Collins moved to increase the funding for the City Solicitor, Assistant City Solicitor, and Elections Director

Councillor Scarpelli said he wanted to ask the DPW to do an analysis of what it would cost for a three team and give us an idea of what we spent in bonding, for sidewalk and street repair, and requested that this be given a separate paper number as a B-Paper.

Councillor Tseng offered an amendment to the B-Paper requesting a proposed number for increased spending in road signage, markings, and striping to speed up road repair.

Councillor Leming said he wanted to get more information on salary increases and asked if any of these salaries are under study. President Bears said he believed that all these salaries are under study as part of the classification and compensation study.

President Bears said he would like to see something from free cash to update city financial software, and Councillor Tseng so moved. Vice President Collins said she would like to see this move forward as well. Councillor Scarpelli recommended getting more staffing. He said he would like to see what the software system would cost. He said that the system was in place previously when retro pay was addressed. He said that this could be management, not the system.

Councillor Tseng said that at the last meeting, there was a good explanation of what we are looking for in financial software. He said he would move in favor of this level of transparency.

President Bears said that the communication issues are twofold, between people, and between systems.

Vice President Collins seconded Councillor Tseng's motion. Vice President Collins said she favored keeping our list of recommendations short and sweet this year. She said that this is about level service. She said that there are differences between level service and level funding.

Councillor Tseng made the following motion, seconded by Vice President Collins, amended by Councilors Scarpelli and Callahan:

1. Recommendation for a level-service budget for the City of Medford, including meeting the Medford Public Schools funding recommendation of the Medford School Committee; meeting the Medford Public Library funding recommendation of the Library Trustees; and maintaining all grant-funded City positions in every department with the acknowledgment that most of those grant-funded positions currently exist in the Board of Health, Office of Planning, Development and Sustainability, and Office of Prevention and Outreach.
2. Recommendation to increase the budgeted amount for the City Solicitor salary by \$49,871 per year and the Assistant City Solicitor salary by \$37,178 per year to maintain competitiveness with neighboring communities.
3. Recommendation that the administration appropriate seed money as part of the FY25 budget or from free cash reserves to develop a clear plan and timeline for

updating city financial software and payroll systems or to hire additional staff to speed up timeliness of financial reporting updates, calculation of retroactive pay, and other payroll and finance updates.

Councillor Scarpelli offered the following B-Paper, seconded by Councillor Tseng and amended by Councillor Tseng:

Be it Resolved by the Medford City Council that we request a cost analysis from the DPW Commissioner for in-house Cement and Hot Top Equipment and staffing compared to the annual cost of bonding for sidewalk and street repair and refer response to the City Council's Public Works and Facilities Committee.

Be it Further Resolved that DPW include a proposed budget for road signage, marking, and striping to speed up road repairs.

On the B-Paper (Tseng second)—approved on a roll call vote of seven in favor and zero opposed.

Main paper as amended—approved on a roll call vote of seven in favor and zero opposed.

Councillor Scarpelli moved to report the paper out of Committee to the Mayor, and to adjourn, at 6:51 (Councillor Tseng second)—approved on a roll call vote of seven in favor and zero opposed.

President Bears adjourned the meeting at 6:51 p.m.