

Human Resources Department

Mission

To support the City's workforce by delivering employee-centered Human Resource services that foster a positive, inclusive, and adaptable environment. We strive to attract, develop, and retain talent from all sectors of society, supporting continuous growth and preparing employees for the challenges of today and tomorrow. Through fair compensation, development opportunities, and policies and procedures backed by best practices and a commitment to well-being, we strive to create a workplace where every employee has the opportunity to thrive, feel valued, be respected, and succeed.

The Human Resources Department serves as a strategic partner to the City of Newton's employees and management team providing services that focus on employee success, and organizational success. Examples of this work include:

- Leadership and Organizational Support
- Talent Recruitment and Career Advancement
- Policy Development and Municipal Best Practices
- Supporting Inclusion and Belonging
- Employee Wellness Programs and Solutions
- Benefits Administration
- Workplace Safety and Worker's Compensation
- Classification and Compensation Strategies
- Labor and Employee Relations
- Labor and Employment Law Compliance
- Management of Grievances and Discipline
- Personnel Records Management
- Risk Management and Compliance
- Succession and Business Continuity Planning
- Employee Onboarding and Orientation
- Continuous Learning and Development
- Management of the Employee Experience and Engagement

In FY2025, the Department of Human Resources continued to invest heavily in supporting the needs of our individual employees, department leadership, and union representatives.

Our organizational structure reflects our priorities:

(1) Citywide/Executive Leadership Division: Shapes the city's employment landscape by managing collective bargaining, developing policies, and fostering an inclusive workplace culture. This division ensures alignment between citywide and departmental objectives while supporting other HR units, enabling cohesive operations that align tactical efforts with strategic goals.

(2) Department Support Division: Provides operational and administrative support to City Departments by managing recruitment, talent development, employee relations, and compliance. Acting as a bridge between centralized HR functions and department needs, this division ensures timely responses and coordinated support for personnel matters.

(3) Specialty Division: Focuses on complex areas like employee injury management, leave administration, reasonable accommodations, safety initiatives, benefits, and wellness programs.

HR team members collaborate across divisions to align goals and streamline support.

Recruitment Successes and Challenges

Our HR team excelled in hiring, retaining, developing, and supporting employees.

Through April 2025, HR supported hiring for 89 positions—58 full-time and 21 part-time—including 24 in Public Works, 14 in Health & Human Services (including 9 school nurses), 11 at the Newton Free Library, and 12 full-time plus more than 250 seasonal employees in

Parks, Recreation, and Culture. The team also facilitated recruitment for 231 election workers for the November 2024 presidential election. Key leadership positions filled included Police Chief, Commissioner of Public Works, and Director of School Health Services, all of which were internal candidates with long experience in Newton.

FY2025 recruitment challenges reflected broader trends in Massachusetts, with shortages in technology, finance, and healthcare roles; evolving candidate expectations around flexible work models; and increased salary demands.

Our HR team used a range of proactive techniques to attract employees. HR emphasized employee training pipelines through partnerships like Teamsters Local 25 Training Fund for specialized licenses (e.g., CDL) and supervisory development. We expanded our *LinkedIn* presence by sharing job postings, employee milestones, and engagement events to enhance our employer brand. Partnerships with MassHire and local schools helped tap specialized talent pools through job fairs like MassHire Veteran's Job Fair (Nov. 2024) and Newton North Job Fair (April 2025).

Employee Benefits

In FY2025, the HR team made significant strides in benefits administration, compliance, and employee engagement initiatives to provide comprehensive resources for employees and retirees. A key focus was Medicare compliance, with consistent follow-ups resulting in nearly 100 retirees securing proper coverage and a 100% compliance rate among newly eligible retirees. We launched our first annual Medicare awareness campaign for active employees, improving outreach and education. Future efforts will include pre-retirement seminars, workshops, and digital resources to enhance preparedness.

We transitioned dental and life insurance to new carriers—Blue Cross Blue Shield Dental Blue for dental insurance and The Hartford for life insurance. A new Retiree+1 option better aligned with retirees’ needs, and a Special Open Enrollment period in November 2024 offered more flexible benefits access. HR leveraged a new Employee Self-Service (ESS) system for paperless ACA 1095-C forms, reducing administrative burdens and enhancing compliance under the Paperwork Burden Reduction Act. We will continue optimizing paperless technology to improve efficiency, sustainability, and cost-saving efforts citywide; we are grateful for the partnership with Newton’s Information Technology staff on this effort.

Employee Wellness

In FY2025, the HR team advanced employee wellness initiatives and workplace well-being by focusing on proactive employee empowerment and skill-building. We continued partnering with CMG Associates for our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and maintained the Employee Wellness Room on the first floor of City Hall as a key resource. Our Week of Wellness, in collaboration with Health and Human Services, included mindfulness workshops and guided exercises. We expanded wellness education with monthly virtual training on emotional intelligence, burnout prevention, workplace boundaries, and change management. The Employee Wellness Survey garnered 650 responses, guiding future strategies.

Employee Communications

In FY2025, we strengthened employee communications, increasing Employee Self-Service (ESS) utilization and training department timekeepers for smoother adoption. For the second consecutive year we utilized the ESS Applicant Tracking module for PRC seasonal hiring, processing over 250 summer hires.

The *HR Connect: Employee Newsletter*, now a cornerstone in our communication strategy, celebrated its one-year anniversary in FY2025. We also expanded our New Employee Orientation by adding content on safety, workers’ compensation, and retirement planning.

Employee Safety

Our commitment to employee safety starts on day one and extends across all departments. In FY2025, we added a safety segment to New Employee Orientation covering workers’ compensation, injury prevention, and emergency procedures. The frequency of workers’ compensation claims, and injury incidents decreased thanks to collaboration with Safety Net and the Teamsters Local 25 Training Fund.

Supporting Inclusion and Belonging

We strive to create a workplace where every employee has the opportunity to thrive, feel valued, be respected, and grow.

In FY2025, we continued these efforts by continuing our collaboration with Bird Guess of Racial Equity Group and the city’s Executive Office. As one example, we improved digital access for non-desk workers, supporting access to essential communications and citywide initiatives. All employees now have the tools to stay informed from day one.

Employee Development

Employee training and development remained a key focus in FY2025. We continued our commitment to leadership training by providing employees with access during the workday to the Massachusetts Municipal Association and Suffolk University Certificate in Local Government Leadership and Management program. This program combines public management theory with practical topics like

budgeting, HR challenges, and strategic leadership.

The HR team also coordinated its second Supervisory and Leadership Training and Development Program for newly hired or promoted supervisory staff in the Spring 2025, offered onsite by the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management.

Labor and Employee Relations

In FY2025, our HR team continued our collaborative relationships with the City's unions and engaged in the bargaining process effectively. Using collaborative strategies emphasizing fair and mutually beneficial outcomes, we entered successor contracts for FY25–FY27 with several unions, including three AFSCME unions, with negotiations for the remaining two expected to conclude by year-end. Agreements were also reached with the School Nurses union and Teamsters Local 25, representing skilled labor in DPW, Parks, Recreation and Culture, and Public Facilities. For the Police Officers union, we engaged in arbitration through the Joint Labor Management Council in early 2025 and await the outcome.

We partnered with the Law Department, department leadership, and union representatives to integrate past agreements into comprehensive collective bargaining agreements. In FY2025, this work was completed for three unions, with plans to finalize our largest AFSCME union by year-end and a commitment to continue until all agreements are clear, reader-friendly, and fully reflect employment terms for union personnel.

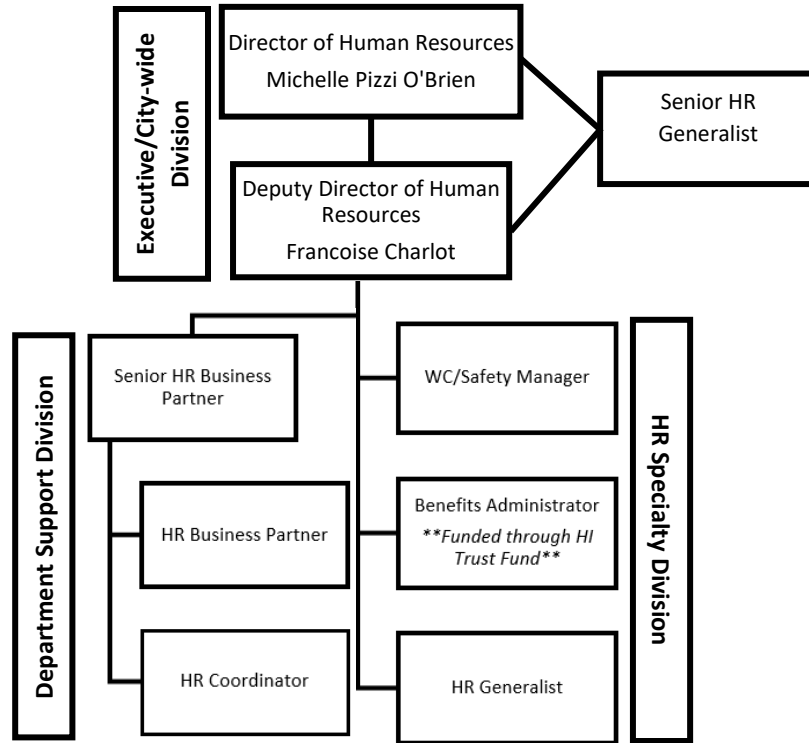
The goal of our HR team remains providing exemplary service to employees and management through a professional and strategic HR Department.

I am immensely proud to have recently celebrated my sixth-year anniversary as the Human Resources Director for the City of Newton and I look forward to working with, and for, our employees in the years ahead.



Michelle Pizzi O'Brien, M.P.A.
Director of Human Resources

HUMAN RESOURCES



Financial and Operating Highlights

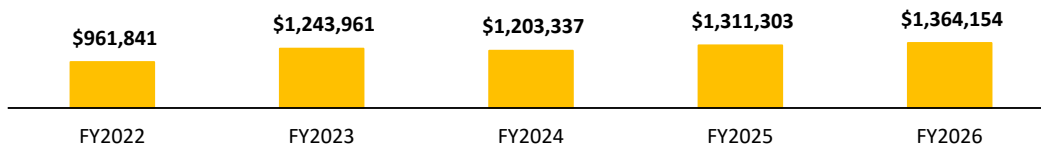
Financial Highlights

	< -----Actual ----->			Original	Proposed
	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026
Expenditure by Department					
Human Resources	\$ 961,841	\$ 1,243,961	\$ 1,203,337	\$ 1,311,303	\$ 1,364,154
Total	\$ 961,841	\$ 1,243,961	\$ 1,203,337	\$ 1,311,303	\$ 1,364,154
% Incr	-0.23%	29.33%	-3.27%	8.97%	4.03%

Personnel

Full-Time	8	9	9	9	9
Part-Time	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8	9	9	9	9

Total HR Expenditures



Operating Highlights

Positions Supported: Through April of 2025, supported the hiring of 89 full time and part time employees and almost 500 temporary/seasonal positions.

Health Insurance: HR team continued its partnership in its second year with BCBS for health insurance and transitioned 3100 active employees and retirees on our former dental plan to the new BCBS Dental Blue plan. We also transitioned over 1700 life insurance policies to our new carrier with The Hartford.

Wellness: Implemented Citywide wellness initiatives through the BCBS Wellness Fund of \$30K. Conducted citywide wellness survey with over 650 responses. Through continuous engagement efforts we continue to see an upwards trend in utilization with Employee Assistance Program (EAP) usage reaching 15.11% of employees. Conducted wellness training through our Employee Empowerment series reaching up to 200 employees.

Training: Over 60 hours, including the Supervisory Leadership Development Program and Customer Service and De-escalation, among others.

Personnel Actions: Estimated personnel actions processed by HR staff for the full fiscal year will be over 1034 actions.

Workers Compensation/Injury Management: Through a team-focused approach to injury prevention, prompt injury reporting, and early intervention, Workers' Compensation frequency has decreased by 23%. Additionally, Police and Fire 111F Injury on Duty frequency has dropped by 30%, with severity reduced by 50%, reflecting comprehensive injury management strategies.

Human Resources Department

Fiscal Year 2026 Outcomes and Strategies

We are focused in FY2026 on strengthening our hiring processes, investing in employee growth, and ensuring our classification and compensation structures align with organizational needs and market trends.

A key priority is enhancing the way we attract and select employees. This includes having clear and competitive job descriptions, leveraging modern hiring tools such as ESS Applicant Tracking through MUNIS' HRIS system, and working to streamline a hiring process that is welcoming and efficient.

We recognize that we can enhance organizational effectiveness and retain more employees by upskilling employees, investing in leadership training, and being proactive in identifying and closing skills gaps. Our overall goal is to further embed learning and development into the City's workplace culture, so we equip employees with the resources they need to thrive.

Outcome 1

Hire Talented People and Support Employee Development

Outcome 2

Foster a Culture of Belonging and Opportunity

As we continue to build a vibrant and inclusive workplace, our HR Department remains committed to fostering an environment where all employees feel valued, respected, and empowered. In FY2026, we will continue our dedication to promoting a culture of belonging and equity, where everyone has equal opportunities to thrive. By embracing diverse perspectives and experiences, our HR team

helps to drive innovation and success for our municipal departments. Our efforts will focus on cultivating a representative workforce that reflects the community we serve and improving our workplace through fair treatment and opportunities for all. We will continue to prioritize promoting inclusive leadership, training our leaders to recognize and mitigate bias, and create an environment where all team members can flourish. Our goal is to enhance our culture of respect and understanding, where open dialogue and mutual respect in order to foster an environment where every employee can contribute their best and thrive.

Human Resources Department

Fiscal Year 2026 Outcomes and Strategies

In FY2026, the Department of Human Resources will continue refining and strengthening our policies and procedures.

Key priorities will include streamlining policy, procedure, and additional resource accessibility through a centralized digital platform where employees can easily

reference internal resources that are not

always necessary or appropriate to be on our public website. This platform will serve as a “hub” for employees to find the most up-to-date information so that resources are easily searchable and available when needed, and that furthermore, employees and managers receive training on the information and policies made available to them. We will prioritize leveraging technology to streamline HR processes and enhance the employee experience, including embracing a data-driven approach that will support more informed decision-making in areas such as talent management, employee retention, and plan for future workforce needs that prepare our Community for long-term success.

Outcome 3

Continuously Enhance and Expand Best Practices in Personnel Policies and Operational Procedures

Outcome 4

Enhancing Employee Safety Best Practices and Injury Management

improve knowledge of best practices in the field and reduce accidents. Regular risk assessments and safety audits will include experienced partners specializing in safety and risk management to identify hazards and implement preventive measures.

Additionally, we are establishing a safety committee, bringing together cross-departmental representatives to foster a proactive approach to safety. This committee will address safety concerns, implement best practices, and promote a culture of continuous improvement across city departments.

Supporting the safety of employees has never been more important. A key initiative will be enhancing our safety culture with additional training programs to

FUND: 0001 - GENERAL FUND
 DEPARTMENT: 109 - HUMAN RESOURCES

CITY OF NEWTON BUDGET
 DEPARTMENT LEGAL LEVEL OF CONTROL

	ACTUAL 2022	ACTUAL 2023	ACTUAL 2024	ORIGINAL 2025	RECOMMENDED 2026	CHANGE 2025 to 2026
HUMAN RESOURCES SUMMARY						
51 - PERSONNEL SERVICES	569,989	608,445	743,017	788,412	814,803	26,391
52 - EXPENSES	274,040	284,885	301,006	311,550	361,550	50,000
57 - FRINGE BENEFITS	117,312	129,276	151,160	211,341	187,801	-23,540
TOTAL DEPARTMENT	961,341	1,022,605	1,195,183	1,311,303	1,364,154	52,851
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CITY OF NEWTON BUDGET
DEPARTMENTAL DETAIL

	ACTUAL 2022	ACTUAL 2023	ACTUAL 2024	ORIGINAL 2025	RECOMMENDED 2026	CHANGE 2025 to 2026
109 - HUMAN RESOURCES						
0110952 - HUMAN RESOURCES						
PERSONNEL SERVICES						
511001 FULL TIME SALARIES	568,489	597,665	740,017	870,197	897,808	27,611
514001 LONGEVITY	1,500	1,500	3,000	3,300	4,050	750
514005 WORKING OUT OF GRADE	0	313	0	0	0	0
515005 BONUSES	500	0	0	0	0	0
515006 VACATION BUY BACK	0	8,967	0	0	0	0
519700 CURRENT YEAR WAGE RE	0	0	0	-85,085	-87,055	-1,970
TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES	570,489	608,445	743,017	788,412	814,803	26,391
EXPENSES						
524010 OFFICE EQUIPMENT R-M	500	0	363	500	500	0
524080 DEPARTMENTAL EQUIP R-	825	136	1,123	1,000	1,000	0
527400 RENTAL - EQUIPMENT	5,073	4,698	6,601	6,000	6,000	0
530100 CONSULTANTS	56,713	80,113	56,323	25,000	75,000	50,000
530218 FLEX SPENDING PLAN AD	37,440	38,245	41,755	45,000	45,000	0
530220 INVESTIGATION SERVICES	25,698	32,585	41,908	40,000	40,000	0
530221 FIT FOR DUTY SERVICES	5,206	4,300	5,450	10,000	10,000	0
531900 TRAINING EXPENSES	43,978	3,768	51,078	75,000	75,000	0
532100 TUITION ASSISTANCE	2,947	2,855	3,064	8,000	8,000	0
534010 TELEPHONE	585	515	513	750	750	0
534020 CELLULAR TELEPHONES	2,267	3,185	1,997	4,000	4,000	0
534100 POSTAGE	786	8,864	2,450	2,000	2,000	0
534200 PRINTING	1,362	5,366	2,838	1,500	1,500	0
534300 ADVERTISING/PUBLICATIO	12,735	7,330	11,833	10,000	10,000	0
537100 MEDICAL SERVICES	69,209	80,551	62,867	70,000	70,000	0
542000 OFFICE SUPPLIES	5,731	9,201	8,678	5,000	5,000	0
571000 VEHICLE USE REIMBURSE	0	14	0	300	300	0
571100 IN-STATE CONFERENCES	0	1,058	0	2,500	2,500	0
571200 REFRESHMENTS/MEALS	1,557	604	360	500	500	0
572000 OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL	0	0	0	3,000	3,000	0
573000 DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS	1,428	1,496	1,805	1,500	1,500	0
TOTAL EXPENSES	274,040	284,885	301,006	311,550	361,550	50,000
FRINGE BENEFITS						
570200 UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT	30,373	53,495	45,212	90,000	90,000	0
57DENT DENTAL INSURANCE	2,274	1,922	2,253	2,319	2,018	-301
57HLTH HEALTH INSURANCE	63,808	54,101	76,466	84,881	65,075	-19,806
57LIFE BASIC LIFE INSURANCE	246	255	270	284	284	0
57MEDA MEDICARE PAYROLL TAX	7,516	8,176	9,992	12,666	11,814	-852
57OPEB OPEB CONTRIBUTION	13,095	11,327	16,968	21,191	18,610	-2,581
TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS	117,312	129,276	151,160	211,341	187,801	-23,540
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